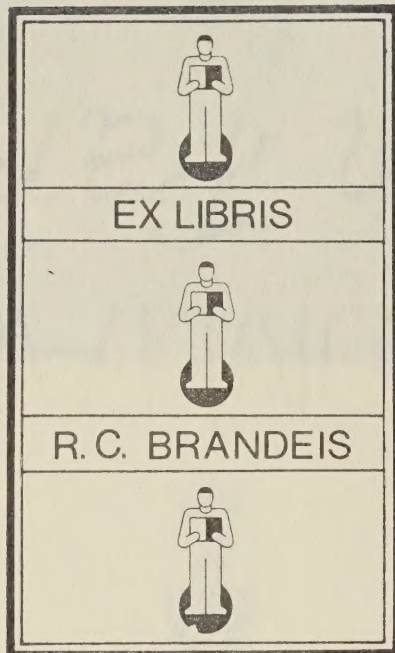




A TALE
OF ROME IN
THE FIRST CENTURY





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To my dear Mother
Annie
Christmas day 1877



HELENA'S HOUSEHOLD.



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HELENA'S HOUSEHOLD:

A Tale of Rome

IN

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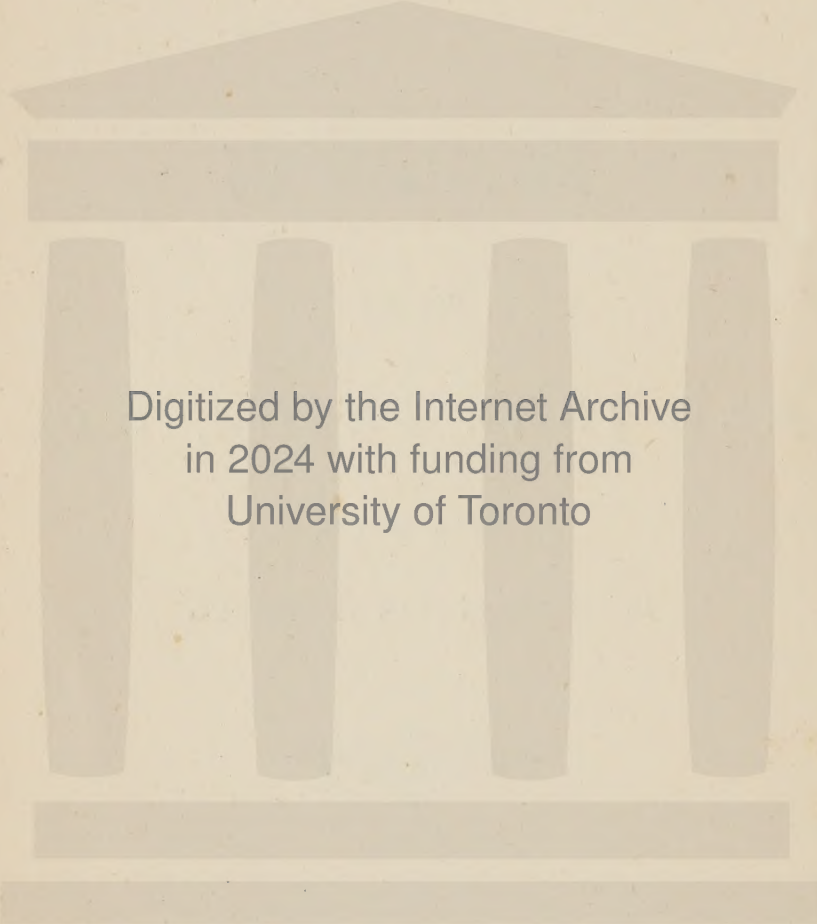
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1873.



To the
REV. JOHN PRYOR, D.D.,
THIS BOOK
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.





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HELENA'S HOUSEHOLD.

I.

The Jew who had Appealed unto Caesar.



ROME,—in the year of the city, 814; in the year of grace, 61; Nero on the throne; the apostles preaching Christianity; the ancient world in the period of its highest civilization, when petty divisions had become extinguished, and all the nations bowed to the one central city;—such is the time of this story.

It was a busy, a rich, and a densely-peopled world. Military roads started from the great centre, and went to the uttermost bounds of the empire. The Mediterranean was the highway of nations; surrounded by a girdle of populous cities; everywhere traversed by vast fleets, and filled with the commerce of the world.

Roman law had fashioned all the provinces into one form, and stamped them all with one image; and those states which were formerly ravaged by war or piracy, now, under the influence of universal peace, grew with a rapidity that had not been known before.

Taking a comprehensive view of this world, Spain first attracts our attention, where for some time a Roman province

had been advancing so peacefully, that history finds but little to record. Culture was there, and Rome was receiving from that quarter her Lucans, Senecas, and Trajans. Cities lined the coast, prominent among which was Gades, which yet, as of old, sends over the world its exports of fruit, and wine, and oil. Perhaps Spain was more prosperous than now. Certainly Africa was much more so. Along the whole northern coast there was a line of nations, rich in culture and prosperity, possessing great cities, which sent over to Rome its chief supplies of grain. Carthage had arisen from its ruins on a new site, and many capitals had grown up in places which not long before had been the battle-grounds of barbarous tribes. Alexandria had already reached a lofty position in science and literature, as well as in commerce, and was yet advancing still higher. Over all the country caravans pierced the desert, carrying civilization to the savages beyond, and the whole land was going on in a career of prosperity, which continued for generations with various fortunes, till it was checked by the disasters of the falling empire, and afterwards diverted in a new direction by Mohammedan conquest.

From Alexandria came the largest ships and greatest fleets; for Roman pride was yet conveying to the metropolis those enormous Egyptian obelisks which yet remain in the modern city; and no small part of Eastern commerce came up the Red Sea, to send through this port the spices, the gold, the gems, the silks, and the rich tissues which were demanded by Roman luxury.

Nor must we forget Palestine. Long since Hellenized to some extent, and now partly Romanized, the people saw their country filled with the symbols of Western art and science; but, in the presence of Greek rhetoricians and Roman soldiers, they cherished that fierce fanaticism which blazed up in revolt at last, and was quenched in the untold agonies of the memorable siege of Jerusalem.

Beyond Palestine were the crowded regions of Syria and Asia Minor, where there were cities such as Ephesus, Antioch, Smyrna, and Damascus, with many others, which surpassed the capital itself in splendour and magnificence, and have left ruins which are the wonder of the modern traveller. Through these came that great overland traffic with the furthest East, which formed a perpetual succession of caravans between the Roman and the Chinese provinces.

What lay beyond the nearest deserts crossed by the caravans was a profound mystery to the Romans. Their arms had never reduced Persia to subjection; nor had a Roman general ever gazed on the plains of Scinde, or embarked his legions on the Persian Gulf. The Parthians were more formidable to the Romans than the Persians had been to the Greeks; nor did the Latin historian ever forgive Alexander for leading his armies beyond the flight of the Roman eagles.

The descendants of those Greeks who had thus outdone the Romans in the furthest East, still lived with a certain vitality in their old home. Athens was more populous than ever, and the country was prosperous. But the glory had departed, and the ancient genius had vanished for ever. It would be a great mistake, however, to suppose that the Greeks had sunk to a level with the other races under the iron dominion of Rome; on the contrary, they towered above them all.

The position of the Greeks at this time is partly instructive and partly amusing. They were at once the scholars, the wits, and the sharpers of the day. Their literature was studied everywhere; their arts were everywhere admired. No one who pretended to be anybody was ignorant of their language. It was the universal tongue, and had penetrated into all countries. Everything that required art, skill, ingenuity, all the finer employments of every kind, had everywhere fallen to the lot of the Greeks. They were the best painters, sculptors, architects, and musicians. The master-pieces of art now preserved at

Rome, if they bear any names at all, have those of Greek artists. Wealthy Romans sent their sons to Athens to acquire a liberal education, or hired Greek tutors in their own houses at Rome. In Rome the Greek was everything. In the words of the sneering satirist,—

“Grammar, surveying, physic, shaving, art,
Rope-dancing, magic,—all, he knows by heart.”

Northward, the barbarian races were held in check, yet chafed furiously against the barrier. The Pannonians and Dacians were watching their opportunity. The Germans refused to be conquered. Beyond them lay the innumerable Goths, behind whom were the Sarmatians and Scythians, who again were pressed in their rear by others. Among these tribes the Romans found a spirit which no longer existed among themselves.

Gaul had settled down into an orderly Roman province, with all the customary signs of Roman refinement. The southern coast had been a civilized country for ages; and Massilia, which was founded by the Greeks centuries before, was distinguished for its culture; while in its neighbourhood were powerful cities which have bequeathed to our times vast monuments and majestic ruins.

Beyond the sea lay Britain, now filled with war and carnage. For this was the year of the vengeance of Boadicea, when Suetonius had marched against the Druids, leaving the island in his rear unprotected. Then the British queen had gone with her daughters among the tribes, rousing them to revenge. The country fell back into their power. Suetonius was lost to view; and the Roman, looking toward Britain, saw everything hidden from view by the smoke of burning cities.

And what was Italy itself, the centre of this ancient world? A vast community of cities, a network of magnificent roads; its land cultivated like a garden, and teeming with population. In the north were the fertile plains at the foot of the Alps, with many stately and populous cities. Next came Etruria, where

the olive and the vine grew over all the hill-slopes and throughout the quiet valleys. Campania was then filled with inhabitants; the Pontine marshes were drained and cultivated; and the most beautiful part of all the world was found then, as now, in Naples Bay, where Roman luxury had exhausted all its resources in contriving new sources of delight and new modes of enjoyment.

Where shall we begin? Shall it be with Pæstum, where in this age those five temples were standing, admired already as types of hoar antiquity, but destined to a still more venerable age, since they have come down to our day in wonderful preservation; or Sorrentum, with its wonderful valley, where there is perpetual spring throughout the year; or Capreæ, where Tiberius was wont to retire and devise, in hideous secrecy, new refinements of cruelty; or Pompeii and Herculaneum, which the awful fires of Vesuvius were soon to overwhelm and bury from the sight of man, so that they might lie hidden through the centuries, and be exhumed in our day to portray to us the corrupt form of ancient civilization as it appears in their melancholy streets? Or shall we turn to Baiæ, where for generations there assembled all that Rome possessed of genius, of wealth, of valour, of luxury, of effeminacy, and of vice, to present a strange mixture of sensuality and intellect, of taste and corruption; where the massive piles even now remain which Caligula reared from the depths of the sea, so that he might avoid the curve of the shore, and have a straight path in defiance of the obstacles of the ocean; to Misenum, with the Roman navy at anchor, and triremes passing and repassing at all times; to the Lucrine lake, and the Elysian fields, and the Cumæan grotto, through which Virgil makes his hero pass to the under-world; or to that steep cliff overhanging the Grotto of Posilipo, which the same poet chose for his burial-place, of whom the well-known epitaph gives the biography,—

“ I sing flocks, tillage, heroes. Mantua gave
Me life; Brundisium death; Naples a grave ?”

Or will our Christian instincts lead us to turn away from these to Puteoli, to see the landing of Saint Paul, and follow his steps to the foot of Cæsar's throne?

It was drawing near to the close of a day in early spring, when a numerous party rode on towards Rome from the direction of Naples. First came a detachment of soldiers, at whose head was the decurion; and immediately following them was a centurion, by whose side rode two men. The rest of the party were civilians; some being Roman citizens, others foreigners; some of high rank, others of humble circumstances. They all rode on cheerfully, with animated conversation, smiles, and frequent laughter. On the whole, however, their character and expression appeared rather sedate than otherwise, and it was the excitement of the occasion which led to their mirthfulness.

The two men who rode next to the centurion were of different race and more impressive aspect. Their faces and dress showed that they were Jews. The centurion treated them with the utmost respect. The one who rode nearest to him had an intellectual face, and clear, inquiring eye. His eager glance fixed itself on every new object which it encountered on the way, and he asked numerous questions, which the officer politely answered. The other traveller was of different appearance. His size was under the average; his hair was short and crisp; his face bronzed by exposure; his forehead broad and expansive, yet not very high; his lips thin; his mouth closely shut and slightly drooping at the corners; his jaw square and massive, and covered with a heavy beard; his eyes gray and wonderfully piercing. He rode on, looking fixedly at the city, now in full view, and appearing to notice little of what was going on around him. It was a face which one would look at a second time—a bold, massive, mighty face, with restless energy, fire, and power stamped upon every lineament, and yet wearing over all a strange serenity. In the wrinkles of his

brow, and the lines of his face, was graven the record of long struggles and arduous toil; and yet even the most careless observer could see that this man had come forth out of all his troubles more than conqueror.

Such was Paul, the apostle. His companion was Luke, the beloved physician. The officer was Julius, the centurion. The friends were the Christians of Rome, who had come out to meet the apostle as far as *Tres Tabernæ* and *Forum Appii*, at the reception of whose warm welcome the two friends "thanked God and took courage."

And now from afar there came the deep hum of the city, the tread of its millions, and the roll of wheels over the stony streets. The lofty many-storied houses rose high, and above them rose temples and towers and monuments. In the midst was the vast outline of the imperial palace; and high above all, the *Capitoline Hill*, with its coronet of temples.

The crowd along the streets increased at every pace as they drew nearer, until at length they were compelled to move more slowly. The highway became less a road than a street; houses were all around, and it was difficult to tell where the country began and where the city ended; for the overgrown metropolis had burst beyond its walls, and sent its miles of suburbs far out into the plain. The road, at every step, became more thronged, until at last it was filled to overflowing. Here came chariots of nobles on their way to distant villas; there rolled along ponderous carts laden with stone for building purposes; from one direction came a band of soldiers, from another a gang of slaves. Here came a drove of oxen, stately, long-horned, cream-coloured—always the boast of Italy—and close behind followed a crowd of shepherds or drovers. Still the crowd increased: asses with panniers; mules with burdens; fossors with loads of sand from the catacombs; imperial couriers; gangs of prisoners in chains; beggars displaying loathsome sores; priests on their way to the temples; water-carriers; wine-sellers; all

the arts, and all the trades ;—such was the motley crowd that now roared around them while yet they were outside the gates.

Now the road was lined on each side with tombs, among which they passed the enormous round tower of Cæcilia Metella, a sepulchre, like the Egyptian pyramids, built for eternity. From this spot there extended a long line of tombs, containing the noblest dead of Rome. Our party went on and drew nearer. They passed the Grotto of Egeria, with a grove around it, which was hired out to the Jews. They passed the place on which tradition says that Hannibal stood and hurled his dart over the walls, and came near to the Porta Capena, where one of the aqueducts ran right over the top of the gate.

What thoughts were these which so absorbed the mind of the great apostle, that he seemed to notice nothing around him? Was it the magnitude and splendour of the capital; or rather the vast power of that heathenism with which he was making war?

What that society was into which he was carrying the gospel of the Saviour, he knew well; and we, too, may know, if we regard the pictures which are presented to us by men who wrote not many years after this reign of Nero. There is the greatest of Roman historians, and the mightiest of satirists. Each has left his record. Were that record single, we might think it exaggerated; but each is supported by the other. Were Juvenal only before us, we might think his statements the extravagance of a poet or a satirist; but all that Juvenal affirms is supported and strengthened by the terrible calmness of Tacitus; in whom there is no trace of passion, but the impartial description of hideous reigns, drawn up by one whose own heart that age had filled with bitterness.

What, then, is the picture which we find in these pages?

The simple virtues of the old republic had long since passed away. Freedom had taken her eternal flight. The people were debased, and looked on in silence at the perpetration of

enormous crimes. After Nero's dealings with his mother, he could still be emperor. The name of religion was applied to a system corrupt to the inmost centre. No one believed in it who had any pretence to intelligence. Public honour and justice were almost unknown ; and conquered provinces were only regarded as victims of oppression. Private virtues had almost vanished ; and honour and truth and mercy were little more than empty sounds. Decency itself had departed ; and vices which cannot be named in our day were freely practised, unchecked by public opinion. It was a society where vice had penetrated to the heart of almost every household. That was the most familiar thought which was the most impure. Honour had fled from men, chastity from women, innocence from children.

And what contrasts appeared in that society to their eyes ! They saw one emperor cutting away a mountain to build an imperial palace ; and another summoning a council of state to decide about the cooking of a fish. They saw the name and fame and glory of the old republican heroes all forgotten by their degenerate descendants, who now prided themselves in nothing so much as their skill in detecting at a single taste the native bed of an oyster or sea-urchin. Effeminate nobles wore light or heavy finger-rings to accord with the varying temperature of the summer and winter seasons, and yet could order a score of slaves to be crucified as an after-dinner pastime. This was the time when blood-thirsty myriads were watching the death-agonies of gladiators whose vengeful kindred were raging all along the borders of the empire ; when Roman soldiers abroad were beating back the Dacians, or marching against the Druids, in the Isle of Mona, while Boadicea led on the tribes to the vengeance of Camulodune ; and when Roman citizens at home were scrambling for their daily dole of victuals at the doors of the great ; when he was most fortunate who was most vicious ; and they obtained wealth and honour who, by

forging wills, had defrauded the widow and the orphan ; when a fierce populace, fresh from the amphitheatre, and a nobility polluted by vices without a name, and an emperor stained with the guilt of a mother's murder ; gazing mockingly upon the death-agonies of martyrs who died in flames, clothed in the *tunica molesta* ; when, for year after year, and generation after generation, all these evils grew worse, till, in the fearful words of Tacitus, " They would have lost memory also with their voice, if it had been possible as well to forget as to keep silent."

It may be urged, however, that there was much virtue in spite of all this vice. True, there was virtue, and that too of a high order. There are names which glow with a lustre all the brighter for the darkness that is around them. They irradiate the gloom of Tacitus' histories ; and make us exult in seeing how hard it is for corruption to extinguish the manly or the noble sentiment. Pætus Thræsea, Aurulenus Rusticus, Helvidius Priscus would adorn any age. Lucan alone might have ennobled this. Seneca's life may have been doubtful ; but who can remain unmoved at the spectacle of his death ? Afterward Tacitus and Pliny sustained their virtuous friendship, and found others like themselves—kindred spirits—who made life not endurable, but delightful. In that age and in the subsequent one there were good and high-hearted men ; for did not the " good emperors " succeed the " bad emperors ? " Trajan would have adorned the noblest age of the world. Marcus Aurelius stands among the first of those who have ruled. In addition to these great characters of history, there were no doubt many men, of an obscure order, who passed through life in an obscure way, and yet were honest and high-minded citizens. There were, no doubt, many like Juvenal's Umbricius, who deplored the vice around them, and believed with him that Rome was no place for honest men ; but tried to be honest in their way. There must have been many of these, of whom Umbricius is only a type ; too plain-spoken to succeed in a

generation of flatterers, and too high-minded to stoop to that baseness by which alone advancement could be obtained.

Moreover, Rome was not the world. Beside the capital, there was the country. There, as Umbricius says, might be found simplicity, virtue, and honesty. Among the simple, the high-minded, and the frugal rustics, the vice of the city was unknown. In the rural districts, without doubt, the great masses of men continued as they had ever been—neither better nor worse.

Let us allow all this—that there was this exceptional morality in the city, and this rural simplicity in the country. What remains ?

Simply this : that after all, Rome was the head, the heart, and the brain of the world. It guided. It led the way. What availed all else when this was incurably disorganized ? Its virtuous characters found themselves in a hopeless minority. They could do nothing against the downward pressure all around them. They struggled, they died ; and other generations arose in which the state of things was worse. The whole head was sick, the whole heart faint. The life of the state, as it centred round its heart, drew corruption from it which passed through every fibre. Society was going to decay, and one thing alone could save the world.

That remedy was now brought by the man whom we have described.

But now our party have passed under the dripping archway of the Porta Capena ; and the centurion conveys to his destined abode the Jew who had appealed unto Cæsar.





II.

The Young Athenian.

UPON the slopes of the Apennines, in the vicinity of Tibur, stood the villa of Lucius Sulpicius Labeo. From the front there was an extensive prospect, which commanded the wide Campania and the distant capital. The villa was of modest proportions, in comparison with many others near it, yet of most elegant style. The front was decorated with a broad portico, before which was a terrace covered with flowers and shrubbery ; the walks were bordered with box-wood, which in places was cut into the forms of animals and vases. The public road was about a quarter of a mile away ; and a broad avenue of plane-trees connected it with the house, winding in such a way as to afford a gentle descent, and where it joined the road there was a neat porter's house. Behind the villa were out-houses and barns ; on the right was an extensive kitchen-garden ; on the left an orchard and vineyard, surrounding the steward's house.

Other villas dotted the slopes of the mountains far and near. The most conspicuous among these was the one immediately adjoining, a most magnificent establishment, which far exceeded that of Labeo in extent and splendour. This was the villa of Pedanius Secundus, at this time prefect of the city. From the terrace of Labeo the greater part of this estate could be seen ; but the eye rested most upon a sickening spectacle at

the gates of Secundus, where two wretched slaves hung upon the cross, whose faint moans showed that life was not yet extinct.

It was early dawn, and the sun had not yet risen, but in the neighbouring villa the sound of voices showed that the slaves were out for the day's labour. The villa of Labeo, on the contrary, was all silent, and no one was visible except one figure under the portico.

This was the mistress of the house, a lady of exquisite beauty, who was yet in the bloom of her youth. Her manner indicated extreme agitation and impatience. She would pace the portico in a restless way for a time, and then, hastening down the steps to the terrace, she would look eagerly along the public road as though awaiting some one.

At length her suspense ended. The sound of horse's feet came from afar, and soon a single rider came galloping rapidly along. He turned in to the gateway, ran up the avenue, and in a few minutes more had reached the house. The lady had hurried down as soon as she saw him, and stood waiting for him, and encountered him in the avenue. The rider leaped from his horse and carelessly let him go. The lady seized both his hands in a strong, nervous grasp; and, in a voice which expressed the deepest agitation, she asked, hurriedly,—

“Well, what news?”

She spoke in Greek. For a moment the other did not reply, but looked at her with a troubled face, which he vainly tried to render calm.

There was a strong likeness between the two as they stood thus, looking at one another—the likeness of brother and sister. In both there were the same refined and intellectual features of the purest Greek type, the same spiritual eye and serene forehead. But in the woman it was softened by her feminine nature; in the man it had been expanded into the strongest assertion of intellectual force.

"My sweet sister," he said at last, speaking also in Greek, with a purity of accent that could only have been acquired by a residence under the shadow of the Athenian Acropolis—"my sweet sister, there is no reason for such agitation. I have heard nothing directly; but I firmly believe Labeo to be safe."

"You have heard nothing," she repeated, breathlessly. "What am I to do?"

"Yes, dearest; I have heard good news and bad news, but nothing from Labeo. But you are so nervous that I am afraid to say anything. Come," and, taking her hand affectionately, he walked with her toward the portico.

"Helena, do you think you can bear what I have to tell?" he asked, as they stood there together.

She looked up at his anxious face, and pressed her hand to her heart with a quick gesture. Then she replied, in a voice of forced calmness,—

"Cineas, suspense is worse than anything. Tell me exactly what you have heard. Don't conceal anything. I want to know the very worst, whatever it is."

After a brief pause, Cineas said,—

"Helena, you are right. Suspense is the worst. I have nothing to tell you which you may not know. I know, too, your strength of character, and I solemnly declare that I will not conceal anything from you. At the same time I want you to see things as they really are, and not sink at once into despair. Recall for a moment the last letter which you received from Lucius. How long ago was it?"

"I have not heard from Lucius for more than two months," said Helena; "ever since they moved away from London to Camulodune to prepare for that fatal march to Mona. Lucius spoke very joyously, told about the Druids and their cruel rites, praised the ability of Suetonius, and filled his letter with praises of his genial friend Agricola, who was his tent companion."

"You know that Suetonius is one of the best generals in the army—perhaps the very best after Corbulo."

"Yes," sighed Helena.

"You know, too, that his lieutenants are all men of vigour and bravery ; and his selection of such men as Agricola and Lucius for his aids shows his shrewdness and perception."

"True, Cineas."

"Well, think on this now," said Cineas, in a voice which he meant to be cheerful. "The only danger which you can fear is disaster to that army. No tidings have come from it for some time. But such a general as Suetonius can scarcely be in danger of disaster. The reason why we have not heard is because the Britons have been rising in insurrection in his rear, and breaking off his communications."

Helena said nothing, but looked at her brother with unchanged sadness.

"We ought, then, to believe that Suetonius will shortly emerge from the gloom, and shatter the barbarian power to pieces."

"Yes ; but you have not yet told me the last news from Britain, and how do I know what to believe or think?" said Helena, anxiously.

"Because I wished you to bear this in mind,—that, whatever has happened, the army is safe, and so is Labeo. Suetonius will appear with his legions, and take revenge."

"O Cineas, keep me no longer in suspense!" said Helena, in a tremulous voice. "Tell all—all. This suspense will kill me. Let me know the very worst."

"My dearest sister," said Cineas, in a voice which he vainly endeavoured to render calm, "the whole of Britain is in arms against the Romans."

Helena turned pale as death, and staggered back a few paces ; but Cineas caught her hands and held them in his.

"Can you bear to hear more?" he asked anxiously.

"All," replied the other, in a whisper.

"The whole island is at their mercy. Their leader is Boadicea."

"Boadicea!"

"The same."

"The one who has suffered such wrongs! Just Heaven!"

"The very same. She has roused all the tribes to madness, and they follow her wherever she leads."

"Oh!" cried Helena, "what vengeance will be sufficient for such wrongs as hers!" She clasped her hands in agony. "No resistance—no—none—can it be possible, and Suetonius is in Mona! And all the province is exposed to her fury!"

Cineas said nothing, and his silence gave assent.

"Tell all," said Helena, coming up more closely to him.

"All—what of the colonies?"

"Camulodune has been taken."

"What of the inhabitants?"

"Every soul has perished."

Helena gave a groan, and clung to Cineas for support. He caught her, and prevented her from falling.

"Boadicea knows no mercy, and shows none," he went on to say: "with her two daughters she fires the hearts of her followers to every outrage. You can imagine all. But I will tell all the particulars that I have learned. Yet remember that, whatever I may tell you, Labeo is safe.

"It appears that the chief vengeance of the Britons was directed against Camulodune. The conduct of the veterans there toward the natives had produced this result. I need not remind you what that conduct was. The worst excesses of Roman soldiers elsewhere were surpassed here. The place had but a handful of soldiers when the natives rose in rebellion. Alarm and panic spread through the city when they heard the news. The story that has come here relates a great number of supernatural incidents, which I will tell you so as to give it to

you exactly as I have heard it. They were these :—The statue of Victory fell down without cause. Women rushed frantically about, and announced impending ruin. In the council-chamber voices were heard with the British accent ; the theatre was filled with savage howlings ; the image of a colony in ruins was seen in the water near the mouth of the Thames ; the sea was purple with blood ; and at the ebb of the tide human figures were traced in the sand.

“All these portents were described to one another among the people of both races, with many other exaggerations. The colonists were filled with despair, and the Britons with triumph. The people of Camulodune sent off to Catus Decianus, the procurator, for a reinforcement. He sent about two hundred poorly-armed men. The veterans in Camulodune managed badly. The people became panic-stricken ; and in the midst of this the Britons took the town, put all to the sword, and finally captured the temple, where a resistance had been made. A few fugitives escaped, and carried the awful tidings to London.”

Helena had remained perfectly silent during this narrative, listening with feverish and breathless interest.

“I cannot understand,” she said, at last, “how our soldiers were so badly managed. It gives small hope to me,” she added, in a faint voice.

“Petilius Cerealis marched with the ninth legion to the relief of the place,” continued Cineas ; “but he was routed. The infantry were cut to pieces, and the general escaped with the cavalry only.”

Helena looked at her brother with deep and sorrowful meaning.

“O Cineas !”

This was the worst news of all. It seemed like a death-blow to her hopes ; for it was not a scattered detachment that had been lost, but an entire legion.

"It was rashness—it was madness," said Cineas, understanding his sister's thought, "to meet myriads of savages with one legion. Suetonius is a general of a different stamp. He will take vengeance for all; and thoroughly too."

"No, no; he will be shut up in Mona!" said Helena, obstinate in her sorrow. She shuddered as she thought of what might be in store for her husband.

"If that were so," said Cineas, quietly, "there are fifty generals that would gladly undertake to relieve him. But think for a moment what kind of a man Suetonius is. Why, if he were shut up in Ultima Thule, he would force a way for himself back, and bring his army with him. No Roman general need fear disaster. All those who have met with misfortunes have incurred them by their own folly. But I will go on and tell the rest. The Britons, after defeating Cerealis, rolled on like a torrent, engulfing everything. They are advancing now toward Verulam and London. Decianus has fled from Britain, and is now in Gaul."

"Fled! the procurator fled!" cried Helena, in amazement.

"Yes; most of the troops, you know, are with Suetonius."

"Why cannot he collect those who are scattered in the garrisons! Oh, the coward! the utter coward! After stirring up the wretched barbarians to madness, he dreads their vengeance. First a ruffian, then a coward." And Helena paced up and down in her restless and excited mood, chafing and fretting, and finding some relief in her indignation at Cerealis.

After a time, she came back to Cineas, and said,—

"Cineas, if the procurator has fled, there is no hope for Suetonius."

"Hope—why, there is certainty," said Cineas, in as confident a tone as he could assume. "Think for a moment: a large number of military posts yet remain. These the Britons have not touched. Their garrisons can be collected into a large

army. The Britons cannot carry on a siege. They are too impatient. If they do not take a place at the first onset, they pass on to a weaker one. All that is left for Suetonius is to march back, to rally to his standard the scattered garrisons, and then march against the rebels. And tell me, what chance will they have if once a Roman army comes against them under such a general? I tell you"—and his voice grew more confident as he went on—"I tell you, there is only one result possible,—ruin to the rebels. Ruin—utter, complete, total!"

There was now a long silence. Brother and sister stood near to each other. Helena was occupied with her own thoughts. Cineas refrained from disturbing them. He had said all that he could.

The sun had risen and was illuminating the magnificent prospect. There lay Campania,—a vast plain, green with verdure, rich with groves and orchards, dotted with innumerable houses, increasing in their multitude till they were consolidated into the city itself. There wound the Tiber through the plain, passing on till it was lost in the distance. There appeared

"The Latian coast where sprung the epic war,
'Arms and the man,' whose reascending star
Rose o'er an empire; and upon the right
Tully reposed from Rome; and where yon bar
Of girdling mountains intercepts the sight,
The Sabine farm was tilled,—the weary bard's delight."

After a while, Helena, in her restless and troubled spirits, began to pace the portico as before. Cineas joined her, and walked by her side. Both walked for a time in silence.

As they passed the door, a figure darted back, as though to elude observation. He then went into the atrium; and, as Cineas and Helena passed up and down, he managed to station himself so as to hear the greater part of what they were saying. His complexion was swarthy; his eyes black, piercing, and sinister; his expression malevolent and cunning. He was very

large in stature, with powerful limbs, and his dress indicated the rank of household steward. This was the man who was acting the spy upon these two.

After a long pause, Cineas said, "Well, I suppose, I need not ask you what you are thinking of."

"I am thinking of Lucius," said Helena, with a heavy sigh. And then she half said and half sang to herself some mournful lines from a Greek chorus,—

"Whom ceaselessly awaiting,
Bedewed with tears I go
My sad heart ever bearing
Its crushing weight of woe."

"Think Helena," said Cineas, "of what follows in the same song; let this at least be your comfort, if you will not believe my assurances; you know the words as well as I,—

"Fear not, my child, be not afraid;
Great Zeus on high remains:
All things he sees with eyes divine,
And over all he reigns."

"Zeus!" said Helena, mournfully; "ah! there is the difficulty. My Zeus is the Zeus of philosophy, the Supreme One, the inconceivable, the unapproachable. All my life I have been taught to adore him, to worship him with awful reverence. But do you not see what an immeasurable distance arises to my sight, between me and him? O Cineas, there is something after all in the vulgar superstitions which makes me envy those who believe in them. See how the poor and illiterate man takes his God to himself, and prays to him, and is comforted while he prays. The common sailor, in a storm, makes his vow to his patron deity, and feels comfort; he thinks that he will finally escape, and hang up his votive tablet. But here am I in a worse storm, with no one to whom I can look, or make a vow."

"Now," said Cineas, "you forget yourself. What! would you give up your own lofty conception of the one true God, for

all the silly fables of the vulgar religion? Let them keep their impure deities, their Apollo, their Neptune, their Mars, and their Hercules. We have been taught better, and can adore the great God of the Universe."

"Ah, but in sorrow, in sorrow, Cineas. How can we get to him? Can we believe that he will really notice us? The poor wife of some private soldier can perform her sacrifice, and pray to her god, who she thinks will help her. But how can I venture to tell my petty troubles to the Eternal One, or expect that he will hear me? No! No! Do you not remember these words,—

" 'Seest thou not, my friend,
How feeble and how slow,
And like a dream they go,
This poor blind manhood drifted from its end,
And how no mortal wranglings can confuse
The harmony of Zeus?'"

"My Helena," said Cineas, gently, "your present troubles make you forget all the lessons of your youth. Why do you choose the most despairing utterances of the poets? Have you forgotten all our childhood and youth, and the sublime teachings of our glorious Theophilus? Do you not remember the divine teachings of our revered master, about the nature of God, of the immortality of the soul, of holiness, and of prayer? Dearest sister, never have I ceased to be grateful for my youth, when I had such a teacher to fill me with such thoughts, and you, too, for my associate and companion. When Labeo took you away, I felt that I had given up the half of my nature; since then, I have tried to keep up that ardent, youthful enthusiasm, that confidence in the Supreme, which we used to feel together. How is it with you? Have you lost it?"

"Ah, Cineas, I have had a very different life from that of the enthusiastic girl whom you used to make the companion of your own aspirations and day-dreams. I have had a very different life from that which I used to lead in Athens."

“Do you call it dreaming, Helena?” asked Cineas, with mild reproach in his voice—“all those aspirations after the good and the beautiful, that long search after the divine?”

“Forgive me, dearest brother,” said Helena, laying her hand gently on his arm, and looking up with glistening eyes; “I did not mean that at all; I meant that, in my married life, I have had no time for philosophy. As a Roman matron, I have had to take my part in maintaining the honours of the house of Sulpicius Labeo. I have had to travel much. I have lived in Gaul, and especially Britain, for years. I have a son, whom I must train. Does this leave me much time, dearest Cineas, for philosophical abstraction? But yet I have never forgotten those early teachings. I honour and love the doctrines of the noble Theophilus. Who could forget ‘The Master?’ I never can, and I cherish deep within my memory the noble sentiments which he used to teach us. I love Plato and Pindar, and Æschylus, and Sophocles better than ever, and prize more than before those noble passages to which he used to direct our chief attention. I know large portions of them by heart now, as well as I used to in Athens. And yet, dearest brother, in this life of mine, and among all my occupations, all these give me no comfort. I know not how to approach the Supreme, and the great object of my life is how to find out the way. Can you tell me? Perhaps you can rid me of my greatest trouble. If you can, then tell me. You have advanced while I have stood still; you have preserved all your youthful enthusiasm for the Divine and the Holy. What way is there? Let me know it.”

“You overrate my powers, dearest Helena,” said Cineas, with deep thoughtfulness. “In a matter like this it is difficult to find anything like certainty. But I will tell you all that I can.

“You believe, don’t you, that God is wise and benevolent? He created all things. Is it not natural that he should at least

be willing to attend to the interests and well-being of his creatures?"

"Perhaps so," said Helena, musingly; "that is, in a general way. And yet this gives no comfort to the private individual."

"If he is just and benevolent, don't you think that he would be willing to advance the interests and well-being of even one individual?"

"Well, perhaps it may be so."

"He is present everywhere, and knows all things. Remember what Socrates says in Xenophon: 'The Divine One is so great and of such a nature that he sees and hears all things at the same time, and is everywhere present and takes care of all things at the same time.'"

"Yes; that is true."

"Then he sees and hears us at this moment. At this very moment, dearest sister, he is taking care of you in Italy and Labeo in Britain."

"There is some comfort in that thought," said Helena, after a pause.

"He is our Maker, the Author of our being, and 'we are his offspring,' that is, his children. Why, then, should not this Being be willing to hear us both, or either of us, at this time? Can you find anything better than this in the vulgar superstitions? Can we not rely on such a One as this, and say in our hearts to him, 'Thou didst make me. In all my sorrow I turn to thee, and ask thee for help.' Is not this better than a vow to Neptune or Mercury?"

"But the ignorant and superstitious feel comfort even in making the vow," objected Helena.

"To that I will only say, in the words of Plato, 'The Deity is not to be corrupted by bribes. He has regard only to our souls, and not at all to our sacrifices and processions.'"

"Do you believe, then, that we may ask him for everything?"

"Not at all. He is all-wise, and may not see fit to grant it.

He has his own purposes. Submission to his will is the first and highest duty of every one who prays to him. Do you not remember what Socrates says in the same dialogue from which I have just quoted: 'If the God to whom you are going to pray should suddenly appear to you, and should ask you, before you had begun your prayers, if you would be satisfied that he should grant you some one of the things we just spoke of, or that he should permit you to make your own request; which would you think most safe and advantageous for you—whether to receive what he should give you, or to obtain what you should ask from him?' "

"There is but one answer to that question. The All-wise knoweth best.

" ' Oh never, never, let me raise
This feeble will of mine,
To oppose the might of Him who rules
All things with power divine ! ' "

"Therefore," said Cineas, "if you accept that solemn prayer from Æschylus, you will take still more readily that which Socrates quotes. It is the truest and the best for us. You remember it: 'Great God! Give us the good things that are necessary for us, whether we ask them or not; and keep evil things from us even when we ask them from thee!'"

"But, Cineas, are there no difficulties? Can all come to God? Is there no preparation? Will he hear all men indiscriminately?"

"I suppose," said Cineas, thoughtfully, "that there must be preparation."

"Without doubt; but of what kind?"

"Deep meditation within the soul, and profound abstraction for the time from all external things, together with the deepest reverence and the most humble submission."

"Yes," answered Helena; "and you know what Socrates says here, since you refer to him so much, for he says that the purification of the soul is this,—to accustom itself to retire and

shut itself up, renouncing all commerce with the body as much as possible, and to live by itself without being chained to the body. Now, for Socrates and Plato, and the grave Theophilus, this was practicable. If I were like you, dearest Cineas, it might be possible. If I were a great philosopher, like Seneca, this would be the way for me to care for my soul, so as to keep it pure before God. But I am a weak woman, in the midst of maternal cares. To separate myself from these cares, and live a life of meditative philosophy, would be wrong—wrong to my child, wrong to my husband. Don't you see the painful dilemma in which I am placed?"

"I see it," answered Cineas; "but you can do this partially, at least, so as to prevent them from engrossing all your thoughts. 'The soul first of all, then all other things.' So said 'the Master.'"

"Ah! you don't understand my life. All this is possible for you, but not for me. Philosophical abstraction for me—a Roman matron—impossible!"

"Not quite that," said Cineas. "A virtuous life, like yours, passed in the performance of the best and highest duties to all around, is of itself a life-long purification of the soul."

"I try to do my best," said Helena, meekly. "And yet I find that in my intense love for my child and husband I lose all thoughts of the Deity. He remains to me a majestic vision, a sublime sentiment. How can I draw near? Oh, that I could find a way to him! I think life would be doubly sweet if I could find a way of communion between him and my poor self. I adore the Deity, but fear him. I know not how to address him, or even by what name."

She paused for a moment, and then continued, in a sweet, low chant, murmuring words from those majestic choruses which were so dear to her:

"O Zeus!—whoever he may be—
If to be thus invoked be pleasing to him,

By this I call on him.
 For weighing all things well,
 When I in truth would cast away
 The unavailing burden from my soul,
 I can conjecture none to help save Zeus."

"Go on," said Cineas, "and see what the same one says,"—
 and he himself took up the strain :

" 'The One who leadeth mortals
 On wisdom's way ;
 Who bringeth knowledge out of suffering.' "

"Ah ! my Helena, I have often thought that thus the Deity guides us 'on wisdom's way,' bringing for us 'knowledge out of suffering.' I firmly believe that our desire to know him is pleasant to him ; and among all the things that purify the soul, the very best is the aspiration after God. If we desire him, this of itself proves that we are prepared to address him. Friends associate with one another when they have sympathies in common. The desire to approach to God shows that in some respects we are like him. Now, like cleaves to like, and where there is an aspiration after God, there is an approach to him."

"Yes ; but will God come to us ? What matters it how much we may aspire ? We can never reach him. Still he remains inaccessible."

"The approach is something, nevertheless."

"But in my condition it does not avail. Alas ! Cineas, I fear the longings of my soul cannot be gratified. If I but knew him, I might go to him ; but how can I go to him—how can I address him ?"

"My early life," she continued, after a pause, "and your companionship, and the instructions of 'the Master,' excited irrepressible desires within my mind—ideas and thoughts that can never be subdued. You pass beyond me, brother dearest," she added, in mournful tones ; "beyond me. You are going onward and upward in your soul's flight, while I linger near the

starting-place. You already catch glimpses of the Deity, while I seek after him in vain. I know not how to address him; and if I did, my first words would be, 'Great God! teach me how to pray to thee.'"

And now, as she spoke these words, a wonderful thing occurred. In their walk along the portico, they often went to and fro, and at this moment they reached the western extremity, near which was a small room which opened out toward the front. From this room there came the sound of a sweet, childish voice, but in a strangely slow and solemn tone.

"Hush!" said Helena, laying her hand on her brother's arm.

And then slowly and solemnly, in that sweet, childish voice, as if in direct answer to the yearning cry of the mother, there came these words:

"Our Father who art in heaven! Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

Tears burst from Helena's eyes.

"What words are these?" she cried. "'Our Father;'"—and clasping her hands, she stood listening, looking upward at the same time, as though from a half-formed thought that she might thus see that "Father."





III.

Isaac.



WHEN the prayer ceased, they waited in silence for more. But no more words of prayer were heard. The voice of the child laughing merrily soon arose, and Cineas looked up with a sigh.

"Ah, Helena," said he, "I have heard something which is better than all my arguments. Where did Marcus learn that?"

"I don't know, unless it was from the nurse."

"The nurse!"

Cineas folded his arms, and stood fixed in thought. Helena silently left him and went in. After a while he looked for her, and saw that she had gone.

"Yes," he murmured; "the mother must have gone to solace herself with that sweet boy. But the nurse,—where did she learn that?"

He walked up and down for a little while, and then sauntered into the house, and reclined on a couch in the Peristylum. After a while Helena came in, followed by the boy Marcus and the nurse. The boy had an heavenly mildness with features strikingly like those of his mother. He had her spiritual eyes, and sweet expressive mouth. He was not more than seven years old, and rather tall for his age. He came bounding up to his uncle with the air of one sure of a welcome; and Cineas took him in his arms, and pressed him to his heart, and looked lovingly at his beautiful face, and said

a thousand caressing words. After a short time he went running out, and singing up and down the portico.

The nurse remained. Cineas had noticed her before, but now he regarded her with very unusual interest. "Where," he thought, "did that prayer originate? Had those marvellous words been taught by her? Where did she learn them? Did she know their deep significance?" He inwardly determined to find out from her.

She was evidently Greek; perhaps from some of the islands. Her countenance was refined and delicate, and her hair as white as snow. Her features in youth must have been unusually beautiful, for now, even in age, they had a marvellous sweetness. Cineas was most impressed by her expression. It was that of one who had suffered profoundly from some deep sorrow; and yet, though he had never seen a face which bore greater traces of grief, he could not think that she was sad. It was rather the impression of a sadness that was past; overcome by an unalterable and almost divine patience. It was the face of Niobe, resigned to her lot, and acquiescing in the will of Heaven. "Could not this," he thought, "be a purified soul?" The subject of the late conversation occurred to him, and he thought that here was a soul which had separated itself from material things; here was one that might hold communion with the Supreme; one that might offer up that sublime prayer which he had heard from Marcus. He wondered what had caused that awful sadness, now so completely conquered, and what secret power so enabled her to turn bitterness into sweet peace. Those eyes—calm as the eternal gaze of the Egyptian Sphinx—showed no trace of present passion or impatience. He thought that it could not have been philosophy which thus had strengthened her, for he never knew a woman—or had heard of one—who had risen to that height of philosophic serenity to which a few gifted men had arrived.

But his interest in this woman did not allow him to neglect

pressing duties which were before him. In spite of his assurances to Helena, he felt that the situation in Britain was a most critical one. That army might never emerge from the gloom that surrounded it. Labeo might never return.

About a year before this time, when it was determined to crush the Druid religion, Labeo had sent his wife and child away from Britain to Rome. When he did this, he felt that a crisis was at hand. He understood the fierce, proud nature of the Britons, and knew that they would make a desperate resistance. He acted as though there was danger before him. He made a will, and appointed Cineas the guardian of the boy in the event of his own death. He gave the documents to Helena, with instructions to hand them over to Cineas. This she did without knowing what they were.

When the absence of Suetonius had been somewhat protracted, Helena had told Cineas of her anxiety, and he had at once left Athens for Rome. Other circumstances influenced him in going, but this was the immediate cause. The brother and sister had kept up a correspondence ever since the marriage of the latter ; but they had never met during the whole time.

The joy which Helena felt at meeting with her beloved brother for a time lessened her sadness ; and his encouraging words taught her to hope for the best. As for Cineas, he at once determined to know how the affairs of the estate were managed, and do what he could to promote its welfare. He had not been there more than two weeks, when the sad news came mentioned in the previous chapter.

One man had excited his deepest distrust at the very outset. This was the steward, Hegio. A Syrian by birth, his origin was base, and he had been a slave when he first came to Rome. By some means he had elevated himself, and had been recommended to Labeo, who had given him the whole charge of the estate. Cineas had no sooner seen him than he knew that he was a villain. His cunning, leering face and

furtive eye excited the abhorrence of the young Athenian. Moreover, the steward was not particularly respectful. There was a half-concealed impertinence in his manner toward Cineas, which the latter determined to chastise. At anyrate, he felt that this was not the man to control such important interests.

He had come to the determination to have an interview with this steward, and expel him from his office without ceremony. On the morning of this day, he sent a summons to him to come to him ; but, to his surprise, found that he had gone to Rome. Unwilling to disturb Helena, he went to see the librarian, a man of whom he had formed a high opinion, although he was only a slave.

This man was a Jew, named Isaac, whom Labeo had picked up in Syria under somewhat remarkable circumstances. He had been concerned in a violent outbreak of his countrymen, and had been condemned to death. Labeo, however, for some reason or other, had pitied the poor wretch, and had obtained his pardon, and saved him from the agonies of crucifixion. Thereupon the Jew attached himself to his master and the family with the deepest affection and fidelity. For six years he had followed them in various places ; and every year had only added to the high regard which they had formed for him. When the family came to Rome, Isaac accompanied them, and from the first had suspected Hegio. He kept all his feelings to himself, however ; and it was not till the arrival of Cineas that he opened his mouth on the subject.

He was a tall man, of majestic presence, with strongly marked Jewish features. His beard was long, his eyes intensely lustrous and piercing, and his forehead was marked with deep lines. His education had been of the most varied character, and his great natural abilities had enabled him to make the most of his advantages. He was familiar with Greek literature, and Latin also ; he was an elegant scribe and an

accurate accountant. Such was the man upon whom Cineas now placed his chief reliance.

As he entered, the stern features of the Jew relaxed into a smile of welcome. He was at his post in the library. It was an elegant room, surrounded with compartments which were divided into pigeon-holes, in each of which the scrolls were placed. Over these compartments were marble busts of authors, and on a large table in the centre there was the usual apparatus for writing, binding, polishing, and ornamenting the volumes.

Cineas glanced at his work, and saw that he was engaged in transcribing Homer.

"Isaac," said he, in a friendly tone, "what a wonderful book this is! For I know not how many ages it has inspired the mind and animated the life of the Greeks. All of us are familiar with it. Philosophers and peasants, soldiers and magistrates, all quote it. The Romans have nothing that corresponds with it. But with us it is the universal book. We think Homer, and live Homer. Do you know of any other nation that has a book that fills such a place as this?"

Saying this, he reclined on a couch at one end of the apartment, and looked at the Jew.

"We Jews," said Isaac, modestly, "have a Universal Book. But it is a collection of all our writers. It is, in fact, our literature. We all know it. We refer to it always. It inspires our hearts and guides our lives. We live it and quote it much more than you do Homer."

Cineas was surprised at hearing this, but a moment's thought made him see that it was not so strange a thing that a nation should have a literature which they prized highly.

"What books are these?" he asked.

"Our sacred writings," replied Isaac.

"Are they poetic?"

"They consist both of poetry and prose."

"Are there any epic poems among them?" said Cineas, somewhat amused at the idea of a barbarian epic, and imagining what a grotesque violation of all the regular rules such a production would be.

"No," said Isaac. "We have no epic poem. Yet our earliest history is not unlike a grand epic in its subject. Its theme is the highest and most important conceivable. It tells how the universe was framed by the Almighty; and how man was born. It traces the events of the earliest ages, and shows how all mankind have come from one source. It narrates the wonderful origin of our nation, and its marvellous history. Perhaps some day you may wish to read that story. I can assure you that, even to a mind like yours, there is much that can afford instruction and excite admiration. And do not think it a mere outburst of national prejudice, if I say that the man who penned this history possessed a greater genius than Homer, and his book is more to us than the *Iliad* to the Greeks."

"He may have been a great genius," said Cineas, good-naturedly; "but he didn't write an epic poem, and so he cannot very properly be put in comparison with Homer. I should like very much indeed, however, to see the book of which you speak. I have heard something about it. Was it not translated into Greek at Alexandria?"

"It was. But I need not say that to us, who know the original, the translation does not possess the same beauties."

"Of course not; especially in poetry. That cannot be translated. Look at Cicero translating *Æschylus*. Was there ever a more mournful spectacle? Even *Catullus* failed with a few verses of *Sappho*."

"And perverted it," added Isaac. "No; poetry cannot be translated. The delicate aroma is lost when you attempt to transmute it."

"You have spoken of prose," said Cineas, returning to the

subject. "What kind of poetry have you? Is there any dramatic? If so, what do you do about the unities? You cannot have discovered those rules."

"We have at least one dramatic poem," said Isaac. "It is not for the public stage, however, but for the secret meditation of the earnest mind. Its theme is of the most profound that can be entertained by the mind. In this respect it resembles the 'Prometheus' and the 'Œdipus' more than any others of the Greek plays. It treats of the great mystery of the government of God. Such, you know, is the theme of 'Prometheus.' You know, also, how Æschylus has failed in his immense undertaking. The sublimest poem of the Greeks makes the Supreme Being a tyrant and a usurper, himself under the power of the inexorable fates; nor can the mystery and gloom of the 'Prometheus Bound' be dispelled by the 'Prometheus Delivered.' A benevolent being suffers excruciating torments, on account of his very virtue, at the hands of the Supreme. What is there more terrible than this? Æschylus went beyond his strength. He could not vindicate the justice of the Ruler of the skies, after so strongly portraying his cruel tyranny. Nor is it better in the 'Œdipus.' A perfectly innocent man is drawn helplessly into the commission of atrocious crimes, and finally dies in mysterious agony. In this, too, the great problem is started, but is not answered. Such works fill the mind with despair, and the dark mystery of life grows darker.

"But in our poem it is different. The problem is presented in the same way. A perfectly just and upright man is suddenly involved in enormous calamity. There is the same spectacle of unmerited wrong and suffering, which appears arbitrary and unjust; the same things which tempt man to charge his Maker with cruelty—to think the All-ruler a wicked and malevolent being. But here it is all answered—all answered. For the answer is *God!* All is left to him. He speaks and vindicates himself and all his acts. And this is the only answer,

and must ever be the only one," continued Isaac, in tones more mournful than usual; "the only one to him who asks, 'Why do I suffer?'

" 'The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away,
Blessed be the name of the Lord!'

'What! shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?'

Cineas had listened with the deepest attention. Isaac leaned his head upon his hand, and was silent for a few moments.

Cineas then hinted that he saw some resemblance in those sentiments to Stoicism.

"Stoicism!" said Isaac, looking up in surprise. "Far from it. It is the very opposite. For the Stoics treat of man without reference to God; but we look at God altogether, and lose ourselves in him. For what are we without him? And if we once lose sight of him, what remains but despair? But in him all things explain themselves. He is the Infinite, the All-holy, the All-wise. In him I put my trust."

In speaking these last words, Isaac's manner had become changed. A deeper tone attached itself to his voice. He seemed rather to be thinking aloud than talking to Cineas. In this partial abstraction he raised his eyes with an expression of unutterable reverence and devotion, and, looking upward, he began a sort of rhythmic chant—

" Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place
From all generations.
Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting
Thou art God."

He ceased; and, folding his hands, looked downward again in silence.

It would be impossible to express the mingled surprise and awe with which Cineas listened to these words. All that he had ever heard of the mysterious knowledge of the Egyptians

and Asiatics came to his mind. Was there much like this in those sacred poems of which Isaac spoke? Then, indeed, his fond praise was not undeserved.

"That," said Cineas, "is from one of your poets, I suppose. Have you many such poems as this?"

"Many," said Isaac, with emphasis; "but not dramatic. They are chiefly lyrical. Just as in your dramatic works the loftiest sentiments are found in the lyrical parts, so we find our noblest conceptions of God in these. We are a religious people, and our poets were prophets of God. With us, as with the Romans formerly, poet and prophet were identified."

"In what possible way may your lyric poets compare with ours!" asked Cineas, curiously. "Have you anything like our metres?"

"We have a rhythmical system of our own invention. In former times, when these poems were written and sung, our music was by far the best in the world."

"What are the subjects of them?"

"There is only one subject to them all," said Isaac; "but, as that subject is infinite, so the themes of our songs are ever-varying."

"What is that infinite subject?" asked Cineas, only half understanding him.

"*God!*" said Isaac, slowly and with a certain awful reverence in his voice. "In our language it is not permitted to utter the sublime name."

"Your poetry, then, should be deeply reverential," said Cineas, struck with his manner, and sympathizing with the deep feeling evinced by Isaac whenever allusion was made to the Deity.

"I know of no such thoughts anywhere else," said he; "and you know I am acquainted to a moderate extent with Greek poetry. But, in all that I have ever seen, there is nothing like this all-pervading elevation which distinguishes ours. You know

well how I admire the wonderful works of the Greek mind; they are the perfection of human genius. Yet yours is the literature of the intellect; ours, that of the soul. It is spiritual—divine. Let Pindar give utterance to the sublimest thoughts of Plato, with his utmost pomp of imagery and grand lyric storm of passion, and you will understand what our poems may be.”

Cineas repressed, with some difficulty, a smile at what he deemed the most extravagant national pride. The solemn verses which he had heard shortly before showed that there was some reason for Isaac’s praise; and yet, when he put his native poets above Pindar himself, it seemed too much. “After all,” thought he, “this Asiatic can never understand the Greek mind. With all his culture, the barbarian instinct remains.”

If he had noticed Isaac more attentively, he would have seen that he had become much changed during this conversation. Every moment his eye glowed with a more intense lustre; his hands clenched themselves firmly; his breathing grew more rapid. His manner also changed. He spoke more abruptly, and often rather to himself than to Cineas. His tone was almost authoritative at times. That grand figure might have served as a model for Moses. The recollection of his nation and its glories, and all the might of the God of Israel, burned within his heart and transformed him. He a slave? He looked rather like one of those heroic Hebrews who, in the days of the Judges, had at different times led up the people to break their bands asunder, and dash in pieces the oppressor, like Ehud, or Gideon, or Jephthah.

“I am all curiosity to hear some more of your poetry,” said Cineas. “Can you translate some for me which would give me an idea of it? If you can repeat any like that which you spoke a short time since, I should like to hear it.”

Isaac did not answer. He slowly rose from his seat, and

stood before Cineas. Now, for the first time, the Athenian noticed the change that had come over the Jew. His magnificent head, with its glowing eyes, his flowing beard and clustering hair, together with the commanding mien which he had assumed, made him one of the grandest beings that Cineas had ever seen. He thought that such a head might do for Olympian Jove. He wondered at the change, and could not understand it.

Isaac thought for a moment, and then began, in a voice which was at first calm, but afterwards grew more and more impassioned,—

“ I will love thee, O Lord, my strength.
 The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;
 My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;
 My buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.
 I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised:
 So shall I be saved from mine enemies.
 The sorrows of death compassed me,
 And the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.
 The sorrows of hell compassed me about;
 The snares of death prevented me.
 In my distress I called upon the Lord,
 And cried unto my God:
 He heard my voice out of his temple,
 And my cry came before him even unto his ears.
 Then the earth shook and trembled,
 The foundations also of the hills moved,
 And were shaken because he was wroth.
 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils,
 And fire out of his mouth devoured:
 Coals were kindled by it.
 He bowed the heavens also and came down:
 And darkness was under his feet.
 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly:
 Yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.
 He made darkness his secret place.
 His pavilion round about him were dark waters
 And thick clouds of the skies.
 At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed;
 Hailstones and coals of fire.
 The Lord also thundered in the heavens,
 And the Highest gave his voice;
 Hailstones and coals of fire.
 Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them;
 And he shot out his lightnings and discomfited them.

Then the channels of the waters were seen,
And the foundations of the world were discovered,
At thy rebuke, O Lord,
At the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.
He sent from above, he took me,
He drew me out of many waters.
He delivered me from my strong enemy,
And from them which hated me ;
For they were too strong for me.
They prevented me in the day of my calamity.
But the Lord was my stay.
He brought me forth also into a large place ;
He delivered me, because he delighted in me."

The rehearsal of these words formed a memorable scene for Cineas. After the first few lines Isaac grew more and more excited, until he arose to a sublime passion of fervid enthusiasm. His clear, full voice intoned into each line, so that it came to Cineas like the peal of a war-trumpet, and it subdued all his spirit. They blended themselves with the words of the prayer of Marcus. "Whence came all these words?" he thought. In his rapt attention, he traced the sublime idea of the poet, although he could not comprehend all his expressions. For that poet began by singing of his own love to his Maker, after which he went on to portray all the powers of the Infinite One put forth to save him—a man. It was like a new revelation to Cineas. Here was a lofty assertion of that which he could scarcely hope for. He could say to himself that it was probable, that it was desirable; but here was one who declared that it had actually been. The one had conjecture; the other, experience. That experience was here narrated; and in what words! How coldly sounded the loftiest language of Plato beside these divine utterances!

"Go on! go on!" he cried, as Isaac paused; "or no—stop—go back and repeat it all over—over and over—till I have fixed these marvellous words in my memory."

"I will, O Cineas," said Isaac; "but these are only a part of many other such, which are the stay and the solace of my life; and not of mine only, but of all my afflicted nation."

He paused; a sigh burst from him; and he seemed to struggle with overpowering emotion. "No, no," he murmured to himself, "I must not think of it;" and then turning to the Athenian, "Noble Cineas, pardon my weakness; but it overcomes me whenever I think of my country."

Again his emotion overpowered him; tears welled from his eyes,—

"How shall we sing the Lord's song
In a strange land !
If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget her cunning ;
If I do not remember thee,
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth ;
If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

Again he paused, trying to subdue his passionate sorrow.

Cineas was much amused by the agitation of this extraordinary man. The longing homesickness evinced by his words and tones profoundly moved him. He thought the scene too painful for this broken-hearted exile. He rose and came up to him.

"Isaac," said he, speaking in a voice of tenderest and most generous sympathy, and laying his hand on the arm of the Jew, "let me not be the cause of so much agitation. Forgive me. I have opened mournful memories. Think of these things no more."

Isaac rallied at once. He looked at Cineas with a glance of gratitude and affection.

"Alas," he said, with a sad smile, "I think of these things all the time, and dream of them by night. Pardon me. I have lost my self-control, and have been led away by your warm sympathy to forget myself. Another time we will talk of these things. But I will write out some of these verses which you appear to appreciate, as I cannot trust myself to recite them."

And, taking his pen, he traced out the verses on a sheet of papyrus, and then handed it to Cineas.

“And now,” said Cineas, anxious to change the conversation, “I will tell you in a few words the business that brought me here to-day.”

He then proceeded to relate the action of Labeo, and his own appointment as guardian in case of the former's death.

“Now, Isaac,” he continued, “from what I have heard and seen of you, I have confidence both in your honesty and intelligence. I will need an able assistant in the work that devolves upon me ; for I intend shortly to assume the charge of this family and estate.”

As Cineas said this, Isaac's fine face was overspread with a flush, of genuine and unaffected delight.

“You yourself, Cineas !” he exclaimed. “Then I am free from one great and distressing anxiety. I have heard that your own possessions are vast, and that your wealth is equal to that of the richest in Rome. You can understand the business of this estate the more readily, and, what is better, you can perceive if anything has been mismanaged.”

“That is what I wish to discover. You know that I already dislike and suspect this Hegio. He has been controller and manager of this estate for three years ; and does what he pleases. I must see what he has been doing. I wish you now to tell me everything that you know about him. Does Hegio spend much time in Rome ?”

“Much.”

“What for ?”

“He is engaged in speculations.”

“What are they ?”

“He originally began by buying rarities for the table of the emperor—particularly African truffles. He has now for some time been engaged in loaning money.”

“Loaning money ?”

“Yes.”

“Is he rich ?”

"No ; but he controls much money," said Isaac, with deep meaning in his tone.

"Labeo's, you mean, I suppose," said Cineas.

"Yes."

"Perhaps he loans the money on account of the estate so as to enrich his employer."

"The money is certainly Labeo's. Whether he will be enriched or not is altogether another question. Hegio's great acquaintances have spoiled him," continued Isaac, somewhat dryly. "Seneca, the wonderful philosopher and moralist, has shown him how to double his income within a year by loaning it judiciously. Tigellinus is now teaching him how to squander it."

"Tigellinus !"

"Yes. Hegio sometimes confounds Tigellinus with Labeo, and hardly knows which is his master."

"How ?" asked Cineas, not quite understanding him.

"By paying to him the money of Labeo, and making returns of accounts to him."

"Great Zeus !" cried Cineas, springing up. "How do you know this ?"

"My gratitude to Labeo, and affection for his noble wife and child, have always made me watchful over this family. When we arrived here I marked this man. I knew that such a face could not cover an honest heart. I knew that he was a cunning scoundrel, and determined to watch him. Circumstances favoured me very greatly. You know our nation—how it is all united, wherever it may be scattered, and how we all cling together. We form a separate community wherever we go. We all know one another, stand by one another, and assist one another as far as possible. I know all the Jews in Rome. Many of them are very wealthy, and know all the secrets of the great world.

"As soon as I determined to watch this man, I found that I

would need more eyes than my own. He passed much of his time in Rome, and what he did there was a secret to me. I knew, however, that all the revenue of this estate did not go to Labeo, nor anything like it. Where did it go? To some purpose in the city. In order to find this out, I put myself in communication with my own people. At once, all their knowledge was at my disposal; and I, a poor slave, was able to know the whole conduct of Hegio, and his disposal of every hour of his time, every day of his life.

“Tigellinus is the most infamous of men, and already has much influence with Cæsar. He is aiming at the highest position in the state, that of Commander of the Prætorian Guard, but certainly, as long as Burrhus lives, he will not get it. However, he is rapacious and unscrupulous, and has for some time been high in Nero’s favour. He has been the instigator of some of the most atrocious acts that have occurred of late. He has an especial fancy for plundering the aged, the weak, and the unprotected; and, for all these reasons, his name is now one of the terrors of Rome.

“After Labeo went to Britain, Hegio was left to himself more than he had been before, and went more extensively into his private speculations, making use of his master’s money for this purpose. When we first came here, he was carrying on these operations on a great scale, and had large sums out at interest. It was during the first period of our return that he became attached to Tigellinus. He thought he saw in him the rising favourite of the day, and so he paid his court to him.

“Since the disasters in Britain, new schemes have been started by him. He thinks that Labeo may not return again, and, in that case, the estate might be open to an unscrupulous man, backed by the power of Tigellinus.”

“But how could they do such a thing?” asked Cineas.

“The most unjust act is usually founded on some pretext; but

Labeo has never given any cause even for jealousy. He is not powerful enough for this."

"Nothing can secure a man from the power of the Emperor. If Labeo were now here in Rome, and Hegio had secured the co-operation of Tigellinus, there would be nothing to prevent his success. The thing has often been done. Tigellinus obtains the careless assent of Nero. An officer from the court then waits on Labeo, and advises him to put an end to his life. He obeys, in order to save himself from a worse fate. He falls on his sword. His family are driven off to ruin and starvation. The informer divides the estate with Tigellinus, and exults in the misery of his victims. Such things are done every day."

A cold shudder ran through Cineas, as he thought of the possibility of this. There was indeed danger. The name of Tigellinus, he well knew, was surrounded with associations of horror, and few were safe from him.

"All this I know," said Isaac; "but I do not know what particular way of action Hegio has decided on. Perhaps he will defer it until he is certain of Labeo's death, and then he and his patron can seize it as guardians. This, I think, is his present intention. But I believe that if news came to-day that Suetonius was lost, and Labeo dead, the estate would be seized at once, and my dear mistress and her child driven away to starve.

"On the other hand," said Isaac, "there is much to deter even Tigellinus from such a course. Burrhus is yet chief in rank, and high in power. After all, he is more than a match for Tigellinus just yet. I know that he is your intimate friend, and he is also strongly attached to Labeo. Seneca, also, is another warm friend. His ancient family; the Sulpicii, of which he is the head; the high descent of your noble sister, his wife, who is known everywhere to inherit the blood of the Megacleids and Heracleids;—make his name conspicuous, and might prevent hasty action or extreme measures.

“Hegio went off this morning, no doubt to see Tigellinus. I don’t think the present news from Britain will make any difference in their present action. They will wait.

“As to the money of the estate, Hegio has it all. He gives about one-half to the support of the family, and uses the rest to speculate. I have proofs, which I can show you. One of the slaves of the estate is his accountant. He is a Jew, and hates Hegio. I had little difficulty in inducing him to let me see the accounts, and I am even now engaged every day in examining them.”

“How can you manage that?”

“This accountant brings them to me, whenever he knows that Hegio has gone to Rome. We then examine them. It will take two or three months to finish the work. I have discovered enormous frauds, and can show you the proofs at any time. Circumstances have very greatly favoured me, and Hegio knows so little about it, that he never dreams that I am anything more than a harmless librarian, all taken up with my books.”

Cineas expressed in the strongest language his lively sense of the services of Isaac; urged him to go on with his investigations, and said that in the meantime he would consider what might be the best mode of dealing with so dangerous a villain. Then, full of thought, and with no little anxiety, he took his departure.





IV.

The Boy and his Nurse.



WHEN Cineas joined his sister, he found her with the family in the Peristylum, a noble hall surrounded by pillars, with an opening in the roof. Her mother-in-law, Sulpicia, was there ; her son, Marcus, was by her side, and the nurse was seated not far away. Cineas was again struck by her strange aspect, which evinced so much suffering and patient endurance.

As he entered, Sulpicia was trying to comfort Helena in her own way. She was an elderly lady, of what we might call the true Roman style : a grave and noble countenance, a dignified manner, and a mien which evinced considerable hauteur. She was one who could never forget that she belonged to the Sulpician gens.

“ If you were a Roman, my daughter,” she said, as kindly as she could, “ you would show more firmness.”

“ But I am not a Roman,” said Helena, somewhat querulously, “ and I cannot forget that Lucius is in danger.”

“ Danger !” rejoined Sulpicia, with contempt. “ What danger ?—from those savage Britons ? And what, pray, can they do against a Roman army ?”

“ Have they not already done too much ?” said Helena ; and she clasped her boy still more closely to her, expressing by that act her secret thought, that he alone was now left to her.

“ My son’s wife,” said Sulpicia, in accents of grave reproof,

“should learn to have more confidence in Roman soldiers. These Britons have gained some advantages by a sudden outbreak ; but they have yet to meet Suetonius.”

“London, Verulam, Camulodune !” sighed Helena ; and, as she spoke, she burst into tears ; for the horrible spectacle of barbaric vengeance on those well-known places rose plainly and vividly before her. She had known them well. She had lived for a time in each, and could realize to the fullest extent the horror of their fate.

“It was only because they took the garrisons by surprise,” said Sulpicia, with some severity. “Of course, under such circumstances, even Roman soldiers may be overcome. But the strength of the Roman armies is with Suetonius ; and, when he comes back, he will show them what vengeance is. The next news that we receive will be that he has returned and punished those wretched rebels as they deserve.”

“The worst of it is,” sighed Helena, “that those wretched rebels have some cause for their outbreak. The wrongs of Boadicea.”

“I don’t believe a word of it ; it is all their lies. The Roman has always been generous to an enemy. Of course, if this miserable woman wanted to get up a rebellion, she could easily invent excuses.”

“Would they have been so ferocious and implacable if they had no cause ?”

“Of course they would,” said Sulpicia, in a tone that put denial aside. “Of course they would. It is the nature of the barbarian to rebel. And this shows the necessity of severe measures. You cannot have security among wretches like these without strong repression and eternal vigilance. When their armies are broken up again, they will receive a lesson, I hope, which they will not soon forget.”

“Their armies are so large, and they are so fierce and so brave !” said Helena.

“And pray, what does that matter? A Roman army never considers mere numbers in dealing with barbarians. Our soldiers can easily destroy them; and, in fact, their numbers will only make their destruction more certain and more extensive.”

“I am afraid that I have not your confidence,” said Helena. “Great disasters have sometimes happened to Roman armies. Think of Carbo, Cassius, Aurelius, Cæpio, and Manlius, all of whom were defeated or taken prisoners in the wars with the Germans. Above all, think of Varus and his three legions, miserably destroyed.”

“You have a good memory for disasters, my daughter,” said Sulpicia, coldly. “I, for my part, prefer to think of our conquests. Are not these Germans in subjection, or at least in awe? Have not the Britons been conquered? All our disasters are owing to the rashness of the generals, who would not understand the barbarian mode of fighting. Let a careful general go against them, and what chance have they?”

“After all,” said Helena, determined to look on the dark side, “even our best generals have not done much. Even Julius, when he went to Britain, could not conquer it. He made it known to the Romans, he did not place it under their power.”

“Why, how unreasonable you are,” said Sulpicia, impatiently. “Whether he conquered or not makes no difference. If he had chosen, he could easily have done so. Other plans called him away. Britain was conquered by inferior men, very easily; and this revolt will soon be forgotten. Suetonius is a very different general from the others, and he has a large army.”

“But think what vast multitudes of the Britons there are,” pursued Helena. “How fierce, and how desperate. I have heard you tell of their famous chief Caractacus—and you said that all Rome admired him—and Claudius let him go. If

they have such men now, I fear this rebellion will be worse than you think it."

"You are a child, my daughter, and you do not know the Roman nature. This rebellion must be put down. Boadicea and all her followers must suffer punishment for their crimes. Perhaps by this time Suetonius has already done the work, and given her what her crimes deserve. The mode in which these barbarians have gone to work, shows their true character, too. They took advantage of the absence of the legions to rise. They make an attack, and carry all before them. Under such circumstances they are often dangerous ; but when it comes to a fair field of battle, then they are nothing. A small Roman army of one or two legions is more than a match for their utmost force. But if you will persist in thinking of the worst, what can I do or what can I say to comfort you?"

"Nothing—nothing. You are dear and kind, and I am weak and despondent. If I had your firmness, I would think like you."

"I am a Roman matron," said Sulpicia, proudly.

"And I am a Greek," said Helena.

"But you must learn to be a Roman, dearest," said Sulpicia, kindly ; and drawing near to Helena, she kissed her, and added, "Come, my daughter, hope for the best ; at least, show more firmness, and do not despond. Trust in the gods. They have always favoured the arms of Rome."

Again she kissed Helena, and, after pressing her hand, she retired from the apartment. Helena leaned her head upon her hand, and, unable to repress her feelings, she turned her face away and wept.

Her little boy crawled nearer to his mother, and twined his arms about her. For some moments the two sat in this position. As for Cineas, he did not know what to say. Full of sympathy for his sister, he yet was at a loss how to administer comfort in her deep dejection. So he sat in silence, waiting for a favourable opportunity.

Helena at length, by a strong effort, mastered her grief, and, turning round again, she embraced her boy, and regarded him with a long and loving glance.

"My mother dearest," said the child, "why do you weep so? Do not fear about father. God will take care of him."

The little boy looked at her with an earnest and grave expression on his childish face. His mother kissed him, and stroked his head fondly.

"Darling," she said, "what do you know about God?"

"Oh, I know," said Marcus, "how he takes care of all things. He is our Father, and loves us."

"Loves us!" Helena took up the words and turned them in her heart. "Dear boy, you have strange thoughts and feelings sometimes," she said, after a pause.

Cineas, too, felt the deep meaning of the words. He had never learned this from Plato. This child had already uttered in his hearing words that pierced his soul and thrilled him, so he now looked at the mother and son, wondering what new thing would be spoken.

"I pray to God for my dearest father," said Marcus, in a solemn tone, which sounded strangely in one so young. "I pray, and God hears me. And I think my dearest father will come back again from the wars. And when I think of him I do not weep, but feel glad."

"And do you pray to the Great God—you, a little child?" said Helena.

"Yes; for he has said that all little children might come to him."

"I don't know what you mean," said Helena, with some bewilderment. "I never knew that he had said anything. When did he say this?"

Marcus looked at her with a kind of reproachful surprise.

"What! don't you know?" he said, after a pause. "I know the very words he said, and I love them. But you do know

them?" he added, with a sudden idea that his mother was jesting.

"Not I, dear boy; I do not know what you mean. You are so strange;" and Helena looked towards Cineas, whose eyes she encountered, and noticed his fixed attention to the scene.

"I know the words," said Marcus, "and I love them. That is why I pray. Because He said little children might pray. He said, 'Let the little children come to me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven;' and haven't you heard this before?"

Helena did not answer. Cineas heard these words with the same surprise which he had felt before. The whole air of the child was that of one who knew perfectly well what he was talking about. There was no hesitation in his manner, or incoherency.

"When did he say that?" said Helena, at last. "I do not understand you."

"Why, when he was here."

"Here?"

"Yes, in the world. When he left heaven and was living in the world."

"When he left heaven—and was living in the world," repeated Helena. "The fables of the gods tell no such story as this. Most of them, according to these fables, spent different periods among men, but men never were any the better for them."

"Oh, but this is the Great God, and our Father," said Marcus, earnestly. "He loved us and pitied us, and so he came and lived here to bless us. And that was when some little children came to him. And they wanted to push the little children away. But he said 'Let them come, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'"

"What fable can he possibly have heard?" asked Cineas.

"Some one which has been purified and changed in his own sweet thoughts," said Helena, kissing her boy fondly, and pressing him to her.

"And did he say you might pray to him?"

"Oh yes," said Marcus, eagerly. "He said, to ask what we wanted, and he would give it to us; and he said, if we loved him we would go to heaven."

Love again—to love him. Ah, sweet childish thought. All is summed up in love or hate. To love God. Perhaps this seems easy to a child; but to a man it is different. Thus thought Cineas, as he listened, and thought still that Marcus had heard some version of the many fables about Jupiter. Yet he wondered that he had never heard anything like this.

While this conversation had been going on, the nurse had not appeared to listen. With her sad but serene face she sat at a distance from the family group, her hands busied at some embroidery, and her eyes apparently intent on this. Yet she had noted all, and heard all.

"But, mother dearest," said Marcus, caressing her, "how is it that you have not heard of this sweet thought that God loves you?"

"God loves me?" murmured Helena, in a strange, slow voice, looking with deep meaning at Cineas.

"Don't you know this? You speak so strangely," said Marcus, with the persistency of a child.

"And how do you know it?" asked his mother.

"Oh, I have known it always—that is, ever since nurse has been here. And so I come to him, and I pray to him, and when I look at the bright blue sky, I often think I see the kingdom of heaven, and hosts of little children around the throne of God."

"That would be a purer heaven than the Olympian one, at any rate," muttered Cineas.

“And when I feel sad, I go and pray to him, and he takes all my sadness away.”

“Oh, my sweetest one, your words go through my heart. What words are these? Where did you learn all this? Tell me more that you know!”

Helena spoke in earnest, longing tones. The nurse lifted her head with a quick movement, but instantly lowered it, and two large tears fell upon the work before her.

Marcus looked in surprise at his mother.

“Why, haven’t you heard how he hears all our prayers, and dries all our tears? I will tell you what he said, and what I love as much as those other words that I told you of.”

“What are they?”

“He said, ‘Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ His words are very sweet, mother dearest.”

“‘Come unto me!’” repeated Helena. “What things are these? Marcus, where did you learn all this?—that God can love; that he says, ‘Come unto me;’ and receives even little children. This is neither the fables of the vulgar nor philosophy. Is it all your own, my dearest? Is it your own thoughts? But tell me those words again.”

Again Marcus repeated those words of heavenly sweetness, and his mother listened with the rapt attention of one who wished to retain them in memory for ever.

The nurse still plied her needle, and seemed absorbed in her work. Cineas listened as eagerly as Helena.

“If we could only take that as the real voice of our Creator,” he said at last, in a solemn voice, “and all that this dear boy has been telling us, as his words, what comfort there would be for you and me! And what comfort this would have been to one whose fate has often been in my thoughts! Did I ever tell you about a certain strange disciple of Theophilus, named Cleon, at least that was the name by which he was known

in Athens. He came to the city a year or two after your departure, from a town in Crete, and became distinguished among the worst young men of the city for his profligacy. One day Theophilus was lecturing, and Cleon, with a band of companions, came in. They seemed to be fresh from a carouse, although it was early in the day. They were anointed, and garlands were on their heads, and the fumes of wine hung about them. Theophilus was discoursing on his favourite theme, immortality. He spoke of the endless life of the soul hereafter, the condition of the virtuous and of the vicious man. He showed that the man who loved virtue was most like God, and must needs become more like him as ages passed away ; while, on the other hand, the vicious and the impure must go and consort with others like themselves. All this was unfolded with that sublime enthusiasm which made our glorious teacher so dear to all his disciples, and impressed his doctrines so deeply on our hearts.

“The revellers listened with attention, and Cleon, to our surprise, seemed deeply moved. After the lecture was over, his companions departed, but he remained behind. He asked Theophilus, with the deepest respect, if such a one as he could be admitted as one of his disciples. Theophilus gave him a cordial invitation. He then joined us, and came day after day for more than two years.

“He became a strange, silent man. He shunned the society of all the other disciples, but appeared eager to be with the master. Some great load was on his mind. As I used to be much with the master, I often was present at times when Cleon was asking some of his peculiar questions.

“The master’s great aim was to teach that God was holy and just, and that virtue led to immortal happiness. Cleon’s great desire was to find out how a vicious man might become virtuous, and attain to this immortality. He looked back upon a life from which he now turned with loathing ; but the recol-

lection of that former life filled him with remorse. His great fear was that for some horrible deed, which he would never name, vengeance would be wrought on him.

“The master tried to persuade him, that, since he had now turned from this life, and was striving after virtue, it was as much as he could do. But Cleon was not satisfied with this.

“‘I have remorse! remorse!’ he said, once, in piercing tones; ‘it is killing me. Your lofty teachings may do for the virtuous man, who has never fallen. But when one has fallen as low as I, it is impious to think of God.’

“‘God will hear you if you call.’

“‘No,’ said Cleon; ‘I have tried. But it is impiety to call on him. Could I tell you that which I have done, you yourself would see that there is nothing for me but vengeance. Oh, how gladly would I do anything to rid myself of this remorse! How I wish I could have the lot of *Œdipus*, to whom, according to the legend, the fates had pointed out the place where he might at last find peace. I would go to the presence of the awful goddesses, and wait for the end, even if it were the dread summons from the under-world.’

“This was his trouble—remorse for some dark offence which he would not name, and utter hopelessness of escape from his suffering of mind.

“‘I feel,’ said he on one occasion, ‘that there is no hope. Immortality is only a curse to me. To live for ever is to suffer for ever. The thought of *God* is worst of all. For what am I? I pray to *him*? Impossible. And yet *he* alone could answer the dread questions of my mind. He alone could *forgive*. Oh, if I could but go to *him*! But he is to me more terrible than the Implacable Furies.’

“At last we saw the end of him. He came to the master, one day, and told him that he should die if he remained in Athens. He would try an active life. He would enter the Roman army. Perhaps a life of campaigns would distract his

thoughts, and lessen his remorse. And so he went. The master could do nothing for him. He felt this most keenly. Melancholy came over him. His old confidence was gone. He saw new problems rising before him, of which he had not thought before, and which he was utterly unable to solve."

"And did Cleon never tell his crime?" asked Helena, who had listened with the deepest interest to this story.

"He did," responded Cineas; "and also his true name."

Had Cineas looked at the nurse, at this moment, he would have been astonished at the change that had come over her. During the beginning of his narrative she had calmly proceeded with her embroidery; but at length she dropped it, and looked earnestly at him. Overpowering emotion seemed to subdue all her self-control. Her face, always pale, now became livid. Her limbs grew rigid; and clasping her hands tightly, she stared fixedly at the speaker. She now awaited in breathless suspense the conclusion. The others did not see her, and Cineas sat with his eyes pensively fixed on the floor.

"Yes, he told Theophilus all," pursued Cineas. "He belonged, as I have said, to Crete. He had been well brought up, but in early youth had fallen into vice. He squandered his father's property and broke his heart. He then took to gambling; and finally, in a moment of atrocious hard-heartedness, he carried away his own mother to Cyrene, and sold her as a slave."

Helena's heart grew cold within her. But another thing now diverted her thoughts. It was the nurse. Rising from her seat, she tottered, rather than walked, over to Cineas; and, leaning heavily on his shoulders, with a fearful, wild glance, gasped out,—

"His name—his real name?"

Cineas looked up and shuddered. A thought came to him of all the bitter truth. But it was too late now. He groaned and answered,—

“ Philo of Crete.”

The nurse gave a heavy gasp, and sank to the floor. Helena shrieked, and Marcus, springing toward the nurse, flung himself upon the prostrate form, uttering wild lamentations.

“ Alas !” cried Cineas, “ what have I done ? Wretch that I am !”

“ You ! What have you done ? What is it all ?”

“ Take her to her room. And oh, Helena, be tender to her. She may revive ; she may be restored. Be loving and very tender to her, for *she was his mother !*”





V.

The Minister of Caesar.



HE nurse did not speedily recover. The shock had been both sudden and sharp, and her aged frame sunk beneath it. Yet Helena surrounded her with all the care which could be bestowed, and showed her as much attention as though she were her own mother. That she was a slave made no difference to the generous-hearted lady.

The position of the Roman slave was both better and worse than now. There was no bar of colour between him and his master. He was often, like Isaac, a man of wide acquirements and brilliant talents, far surpassing his master in every intellectual exercise. The slave was often of high culture and most polished manners. His duties were as wide as his abilities, and the care of large estates was often left in his hands. There was nothing to make him miserable but the absence of liberty, and this he could obtain by purchase. On the other hand, the greatest ill-treatment was allowed. Nothing stood between the wretched slave and the most brutal master. The most atrocious cruelty was common, and the sight of slaves hanging on the cross, or dying in agony of other kinds, was not unfrequent. Their numbers were vast, and it has been estimated that the entire slave population of the Roman world equalled the free population, which would amount to sixty millions of souls.

For many weeks the poor nurse lay hovering between life and death. Marcus was inconsolable, and in his lamentations over her he showed the source whence he had obtained those ideas which seemed so new and strange to Helena and Cineas.

“Ah, nurse, my dearest,” he would exclaim, as he tenderly stroked her poor thin hand, and pressed it to his lips, “my dearest, who will now tell me of God and the kingdom of heaven, and the sweet stories that I learned from you? And she does not speak a word, though perhaps she may be leaving me for ever. Will she never speak again, dear mother?”

“Was it from her, Marcus, that you learned those beautiful words which you have told me?” asked Helena, and she looked with a newer and deeper interest upon that pale and mournful face, whose expression was so familiar to her. “From her?”

“Yes, all; and far more than I could tell you. She talks so beautifully, while I hear her, I wish to be away in the bright world where he went.”

“He? who?”

“The Saviour.”

“What Saviour? I don’t understand.”

“Why, the Saviour is the name she gives to the dear God to whom she prays, for he loved us, and saved us. But you know this, don’t you?”

Helena was silent, and regarded the nurse musingly. She thought that perhaps there she might find something better for her at least than the philosophy of Cineas. Perhaps she could learn the secret source of that calm resignation and holy sweetness which marked all her actions and words.

It was a kind of stupor which now oppressed her. Isaac, who was not only the librarian, but the physician of this household, held out hopes of her recovery, but said that it would be long before she would regain her former strength. Like many of his countrymen, he was skilful in the healing art, as far as it

was known at the time. He was deeply read in all the writings of the physicians, and had studied the character and uses of many herbs.

The nurse for a long time recognized no one. Her mind wandered incessantly. The secret thoughts of her heart were murmured out in delirium, and Helena heard much of that deep sorrow which had been kept hidden in her breast for years.

In her wandering thoughts she spoke much of her home in Crete, and named cities there familiar to Helena. She often spoke of her son, and seemed to believe herself once more holding him in her arms, a little boy. At times outbreaks of feeling would occur, and she would murmur words of agony. Sometimes for hours she would utter the words, "Betrayed ! betrayed ! and by *him* !"

After a time calmness succeeded, and her wandering thoughts turned to other things. Words of broken prayer—to one whom she addressed as her Saviour—began to be more frequent, intermingled with many things which Helena could not understand.

She spoke of her Saviour as living a life of suffering ; of his agony and grief. She said that he, too, was betrayed, and by his friend.

"What is all this ?" she asked Marcus.

And Marcus told her a wonderful story. It was incoherent and unfinished, as though he knew not all, but it related the sufferings of One whom Marcus called the God or Saviour of his prayers.

All this awakened strange hopes within Helena. She longed to know all this secret. She half felt that here there was an answer to her own earnest desires.

At last, one day when Isaac was present, the nurse began her usual prayers, and this time repeated over and over again one name which produced a remarkable effect on one, at least, of the listeners.

It was the name *Jesus Christ*.

It was the Jew upon whom this remarkable effect was produced. His countenance grew dark, and his eyes flashed fire. Struggling for a long time with some strong internal emotion, he at length muttered, in words of forced calmness,—

“She is one of these Christians.”

Nothing could exceed the bitter contempt of his words.

“Christians?” said Helena; “I have heard much about them, and against them. What are they? Why do you feel so strongly about this?” she added, noticing that Isaac was still overcome by emotion.

Isaac loved Helena with deep affection and reverence. He felt ashamed of exhibiting his wild excitement before her, and sought to resume his usual self-control.

“It is nothing,” said he. “Our people have suffered much through these Christians, and I have an old national prejudice.”

“You hate them?”

“Worse than death,” exclaimed Isaac, for an instant forgetting himself; but in a moment he recollected himself and said, “Pardon me; but something of my old national feeling will at times break out.”

“I am sorry to have said anything to excite it,” said Helena, rather compassionately. “But at any rate you will not include *her* in your hate. She is my truest and most devoted companion.”

“For your sake,” said Isaac, “I would sacrifice any hate. But apart from that you need have no fear. When I act as a physician I never think of personal feeling. My science is at the disposal of those on whom it is exercised, and if I paid one visit to my worst enemy, I would try my best, solely on account of my science, to cure him again.”

Such scenes were frequent in that quiet chamber, but Isaac never again showed any trace of feeling. He fell again into his former quiet habit, visited the patient, directed the application of the remedies, and exerted all his skill.

So the weeks went on.

During this sickness of the nurse, Cineas was fully occupied with his own thoughts. He was often closeted with Isaac, and the examination of the accounts went on rapidly. Enough began to be discovered to awaken alarm, and show that their worst suspicions were well-founded.

One day Cineas thought of paying a visit to Burrhus, the chief officer of the Prætorians, and greatest man in the empire next to Nero himself. He and Seneca had been the preceptors of the emperor, and while the latter taught him philosophy, the former instructed him in military science.

The palace of Burrhus was one of the most sumptuous in Rome. Extensive parks surrounded it, and several acres of ground were covered over with a spacious roofing, supported by marble columns, affording a place of exercise in wet weather. The palace was very large, and in the vestibule was an equestrian statue of the master.

Crowds of clients were outside waiting in front of the steward's door, to receive the "sportula," or little basket, containing the daily allowance of money or victuals with which the heads of great houses furnished their followers. As Cineas came up he noticed some confusion in the crowd. It seems that one of the clients had brought a close litter, in which he said his wife was. The steward would not believe him, and refused to give the wife's allowance till he had seen whether she was really inside or not. In vain the client protested that his wife was sick, and asleep. The steward persisted in opening it, and found it empty. He then, in great indignation, refused to give the client even his own share, and was driving him off, amid the laughter of the crowd, as Cineas came up.

On entering the hall he found a large number awaiting their turn to be admitted into the presence of the great man. Cineas gave a liberal bribe to one of the servants, and told him to carry his name to his master. Orders came to admit him at once.

Cineas went in, and Burrhus rose with an expression of sincere pleasure and embraced him.

He was an elderly man, of fine military air, dressed in the rich costume of general of the haughty Prætorian body. All other clients were at once dismissed, and Cineas was left alone with Burrhus.

“What! my dearest Athenian. How have you managed to tear yourself away from the Acropolis? Let me assure you that you do me a double favour, first in showing me yourself, and then ridding me of my clients.”

Then followed many questions as to his health, the time of his arrival, and his whereabouts. He gently reproved Cineas for not coming before, and offered to do anything for him in his power.

After all the usual preliminaries which attend the meeting of two friends, Cineas asked if there were any tidings from Britain.

“No—nothing,” said Burrhus. “It looks dark, but we all have confidence in Suetonius. Ah! I see—Labeo is there. Well, I believe he will return in safety, after all. With these barbarians the fashion is to make one great attack, and then allow themselves to be cut in pieces.”

Burrhus treated Cineas with kind familiarity. In his youth he himself had been much in Athens, where he had become attached to the father of Cineas, who was a man of enormous wealth, and lived in the utmost state and splendour. Burrhus had afterwards seen him from time to time, and in later visits to Athens he had manifested a warm affection for Cineas, then in his early youth. So he now found much to ask about, and evidently relished, in the highest degree, the company of his old friend.

Suddenly, while talking of Labeo, he said,—

“You have a bad man out there—a very bad man—the steward Hegio.”

Cineas was surprised at this.

“Why!” said he. “How do you know this?”

"Oh, I have my spies everywhere, and can tell you all about him. He uses his master's money for speculations, and some day it will all vanish. You had better see to him."

"That is the very thing that I am now doing," said Cineas, and he then described the examination of the accounts which was then going on.

"That's right. You will have to be a little careful. All that this shrewd Jew of yours has told you is true. Hegio has attached himself to this villain Tigellinus."

"And is Tigellinus on good terms with the emperor?"

"On the best. He is an unprincipled scoundrel, and does anything to get into the emperor's favour."

Cineas was silent, thoughts of what that emperor was came into his mind. Already Nero's name was a terror to the human race. The influence of Burrhus and Seneca had died out, and although they were still in favour, yet Nero had long since gone far beyond their control. The grossest debauchery, the most horrible profligacy, and the murder of some of the noblest of Rome, all these crimes had been crowned and perfected by the murder of his mother, and rang in the ears of the world. Still other crimes were yet in the future, as hideous as these, and more deadly. About such a ruler it was not wise to say anything, and both Burrhus and Cineas, while talking familiarly about everything else, were reserved and silent on this one point.

At length, after a silence of a few moments, Burrhus began,—

"I had a somewhat singular visitor this morning, my dear Cineas, and regret that you did not come earlier, so as to be present at our interview."

"Who was he?"

"Oh, a Syrian—a Jew, rather; the great leader of all these Christians that one hears so much about now. His name is Paul."

“Paul!” said Cineas, with an appearance of the deepest interest. “What sort of a man is he?”

“A man of small stature, thin and meagre, with a very remarkable face. A singularly prepossessing man in his appearance. His eyes are very piercing, and he seems to read your thoughts; and there is a kind of fervid fanaticism in his manner that quite impressed me. I like to see a man in earnest about something, and this man is deeply in earnest. He told me a long series of persecutions which he had endured in behalf of his new doctrine, and seemed perfectly willing to endure as much more. I never saw a higher spirit or more devoted courage in any man. What particularly impressed me was this—that, although he was a perfect fanatic, he had none of that offensive self-assertion which is almost universal in men of that stamp. On the contrary, he was singularly modest and perfectly courteous. His manner exhibited the utmost refinement and good breeding.

“I opened the conversation in a friendly way; and, as I took a liking to him from the outset, I conducted the examination in a familiar manner, and by chance the conversation turned on literature, with which I found him thoroughly familiar. I then found that his hot-headed countrymen, after a long series of persecutions, had put him in prison, and finally he was compelled to appeal to Cæsar. Being a Roman citizen, he could do this.

“This I learned by questions. At length I asked him to explain his principles to me. I was taken with the man, and felt curious to see what it was for which he had suffered so much. Having received permission from me, and even encouragement to speak freely, he began a most extraordinary story, which seems inexplicable to me, as I am a plain soldier; but perhaps you or Seneca, who are philosophers, might account for it.

“He informed me that a great teacher had appeared among

the Jews, who proclaimed himself to be a god, or rather the only God ; and the Jews, in their usual style, persecuted him, and finally had him tried before Pilate and executed. All this was familiar to me before, but his way of representing these facts was very remarkable.

“ It seems that he was very bitterly opposed to the followers of this man, and took an active part in putting them to death. But one day, when on the road to Damascus to carry on his work more extensively, he was startled by a sudden vision ; and he affirms that he distinctly saw, in the skies, the form of this mysterious Jesus, who called upon him to desist from his work. He was so affected that he became a Christian himself. But I cannot give you any idea of the story as he told it. I felt that he, at least, believed what he was saying, whether I did or not. He was thoroughly honest—a marvel in these times.

“ He went on to tell me much about his doctrines—that this Jesus is the Son of God ; that the soul is immortal, and that he died to save it ; but I confess that all this was rather beyond me, as I never took much interest in subjects of this kind. Yet he believed it ; and that was what surprised me. He was willing to die for this belief. How many men in Rome, my dear Cineas, would feel in this way ?

“ But I cannot give you any idea of his forcible way of speaking. It was not art, but nature. Although I did not understand a word he said, yet I felt that it was all true ; his manner made me feel so. I thought, while listening and looking at him, of the familiar lines of old Homer,—

“ ‘ But when he broke the silence, ’twas a voice of mighty spell,
And words like wintry snow-flakes on all the hearers fell.
Was none in all that council to answer what they heard ;
His aspect was forgotten ; we marvelled at his word.’ ”

“ What became of him ? ” asked Cineas, who had listened most attentively.

“Why, I let him go. From the first, I knew the man, and the examination was a form. So I sent him away with friendly words, and told him that I should like to see him and hear him again. He looked at me respectfully, but half reproachfully, as though he felt that I would forget him, and never hear again the doctrine which he valued so highly—and perhaps I will;—but he said nothing more on that point; and, after expressing his thanks for my moderation and justice, he took his leave with grave courtesy and retired.”

Cineas said nothing for some moments. The deep attention with which he had listened to the story of his examination, showed that it possessed no slight interest in his mind. Burrhus seemed pleased with his evident interest; for it showed him that he had started a subject of no little importance to the mind of his visitor. At length, Cineas uttered a few words expressive of his admiration of this Jew, and said he would like to see him.

“You would be even more interested in him than I, my dear Cineas,” said Burrhus; “for I am a soldier, and you are a philosopher. To you this man’s doctrines would be welcome. You could understand them, and discuss them. But I have not the power of doing either.”

Much conversation followed, of a varied character.

“You will wish to have an interview with Cæsar, perhaps?” said Burrhus, after a time, in an inquiring tone.

Cineas paused. “Yes,” he at length answered; “after this suspense about Labeo is over.”

“You had better,” said Burrhus. “His taste would be gratified by your peculiar accomplishments. He has twofold tastes—one for letters, the other for sensuality. Tigellinus seeks advancement by fostering the latter; but let me tell you, Cineas, that you might for a short time rival even Tigellinus, if you went to him with a new theory of versification.”

"Thank you," said Cineas. "When I go, I will know how to act."

"When you go, take him some new thing in music or poetry, and follow it up by talking enthusiastically about art. You will succeed at once. I am in earnest about this," said Burrhus. "Seneca might still have retained his influence, if he had retained his former spirit. But he is growing old, and is not so much of a poet as a philosopher. When you go to Cæsar, don't be too philosophic. Be a poet!—be a poet!"

Cineas smiled; and when he took his leave, shortly afterward, the last words that Burrhus said were, "Remember! Be a poet!"

Cineas had much to think of as he rode home. It was late in the day when he reached the gate of the villa. A loud noise arrested his attention. It sounded like a fierce altercation. He recognized the hated voice of the steward Hegio, who, in his most insolent tones, was ordering some one away.

"Be gone!" said he. "Have I not already told you that he is not here?"

"Away, scoundrel!" retorted the other. "Let me pass, or I will break your head!"

"You?"

"Yes, I, impudent whip-knave! vile hang-dog! Did you not get beatings enough when you were a slave, that you tempt me to give you another now?"

Hegio foamed at the mouth with passion.

"I'm a Roman citizen!" said he. "I'll call the slaves, and give you a beating."

"You a Roman citizen!" roared the other, with a bitter, contemptuous laugh. "You dog of a Syrian! Why, it's only the other day that you were put up for sale in the market, with your feet chalked, like the other slaves, as a new and fresh im-

ported article. You, you hang-dog, a Roman citizen?—a commodity brought over along with figs and dates, and classified with them? Off, fool, or I'll strike you dead!"

He strode toward Hegio. Cineas at this moment came up. He had heard what had been said, and perceived at a glance that the stranger was able to assert his own rights for himself. He was a strongly-built man, of military air, and appeared to be about fifty years of age. Hegio, on seeing him approach, fell back a pace or two, and called loudly to the slaves: "Corbalio! Storax! Ho! seize this man!"

The next moment a mighty hand was laid on his throat. Hegio struggled and struck out wildly. But his Syrian limbs were no match for the mighty sinews of his antagonist, which had been trained in Roman discipline, and hardened in a hundred campaigns. With a mighty effort he hurled the steward back, and dashed him violently to the earth.

By this time a number of stout slaves had come to the spot. Hegio raised himself up, and roared to them to seize the stranger. Cineas had dismounted, and was perceived for the first time by the stranger and Hegio. He waved his hands to the slaves, motioning them back as they advanced, and turned to the stranger.

"Seize him!" screamed Hegio, again, utterly disregarding Cineas in his passion, and trying to urge the slaves on.

"If you don't keep silence," said Cineas, coldly, "they shall seize you." And, with bitter contempt, he turned his back on Hegio. The Syrian scowled darkly on him.

"Health to you, noble Cineas," said the stranger. "My name is Aurulenus Carbo; and I came here this morning at the request of my son Julius, who is a centurion of Augustus' band, and has a strong friendship for you."

"Julius?" cried Cineas, earnestly; "the father of Julius? Much health to you, my friend. I have often longed to meet with you." And he embraced the stranger.

"Whoever you are," cried Hegio, rudely interrupting, "be gone, or"—

"What!" exclaimed Cineas; "don't you know that if I give the word, these slaves will be only too glad to seize you, and scourge the life-blood out of you? Be gone, fool that you are, and don't draw on yourself worse punishment! Away!"

Hegio's eyes sank before the fiery glance of Cineas, and with muttered curses he slowly turned and walked away.

"Let me offer my apologies, my friend," said Cineas, for the insolence of this ruffian. "He is a scoundrel, whom I am even now preparing to punish as he deserves."

"No apologies are needed from you, certainly," said Carbo. "And besides, you have seen that I avenged myself. But I am not surprised at this. Every great house is full of these scoundrels, who are allowed to insult with impunity all who do not come with a great retinue. Pah! Let us talk no more of him. Rome is full of these Syrian dogs. The River Orontes discharges itself here, and the whole state is filled with the abominations of the East. But I will tell you why I came. My son Julius arrived here some two months ago, and never knew till yesterday that you were here. As he was busy to-day, he could not come in person to see you. So I came in his place; for I well know all that you have done for him, and I wish to thank you for saving him from vice and ruin. He has told me, noble Cineas, that, when he was stationed at Athens, he yielded to temptation, and was rapidly sinking to ruin. You found him; and at a moment when he was irretrievably in debt from gambling, and the loss of his rank and ruin were before him. You found him when he had made up his mind to kill himself, and brought him to your society, and paid all his debts, and, what is better, taught him to seek after virtue. What is the use of words? He was saved, and through you. Noble Cineas, a father thanks you for the salvation of his son."

The stern Roman, who had spoken all this without regarding

Cineas's attempts to interrupt or deprecate his praises, now seized his hand and pressed it warmly.

"You give me altogether too much praise," began Cineas ; but Carbo interrupted him,—

"There, there—enough. I will never allude to it again. I hate praise ; but this was your due. We will talk of something else."

"Come, then," said Cineas ; "let us go in,"—and they walked together toward the house.

"I thought you lived in Rome," said Cineas, as they reclined on couches, and had wine placed before them. "Your son spoke of you as having a house in the city."

"So I did," said Carbo, "until last year. But Rome was always abhorrent to me. It is a Syrian city, and the vice that reigns everywhere is terrible to an honest man. What could I do in Rome? I cannot lie ; I cannot fawn and cringe. When I go into a great house I cannot give assiduous attentions among haughty menials for hours, until the master gives me a careless nod. And so I have come forth to a little spot here in the country, where I can have fresh air and liberty."

"Do you live near here?"

"Oh, yes ; my little estate is only a mile away. You can see the house," and he pointed to a small villa peeping out from among trees in the distance.

"Yes," continued Carbo, reverting again to Rome ; "there is no place in the city for honesty, no reward for labour. One's property day after day grows less, and the next day still less. I found my little savings diminishing, and so I determined to go forth into the country while a little of my life was yet left me, while my old age was hale and hearty, and while I could get along without the help of a staff. Let swindlers stay there ; let those live there who can turn white into black, who can get a living by thieving and swindling. The city is full of vagabonds, formerly known all over Italy ; but now they are mana-

gers of theatres and public spectacles. Why shouldn't they get hold of everything? In fact, they will in time. Such is the way in which Fortune jokes with us. No, no. Rome is not the place for me. I can't cheat the public by setting up as an astrologer or a wizard; I can't and I won't promise to spend-thrifts the death of their fathers; I've never inspected the entrails of frogs, so as to tell fortunes from them; if I were a steward, no thieves could live around me. And so I'm not the man for Rome, and you see me here; and here I am, chattering on this bitter theme, which is always in my thoughts. Excuse me, my friend; but I am a Roman of the old sort, and it's a hard thing to see my country going to ruin."

Cineas assured him that he sympathized with his feelings, and could understand his bitterness.

"Bitterness?" repeated Carbo. "Ay, who could help feeling bitterness to see one's country handed over to freedmen and foreign dancing-girls. The flatterer is the only one who has a chance of favour. The Syrian can do this better than the Roman. He comes here a slave; and, before you know it, he is high in favour, and can take a seat above you at the table. He can lie about you, and have you excluded altogether from the house.

"There's no chance for a poor man. Even in courts of law their oath is slighted. Bring forward the best of men—bring forward Numa in a Roman law-court now, and the first question would be as to his revenue. How many slaves does he own? How many acres does he possess? The poor man is thrust into the lowest places at tables and the worst seats in the public spectacles."

He stopped abruptly, and began to talk of something else in a mild and very different tone. Cineas found that when he was speaking on any other subject, he was grave and calm, but when once he commenced on the subject of Rome, he was bitter and vehement and passionate. He loved his country; his

penetrating eye saw the ruin that was overspreading it ; yet he saw not one ray of hope. Nor did Cineas. He, too, knew the vice of the capital, and did not know how it could end at last. And so the day ended, and late in the evening Carbo took his departure.





VI.

The Officer who Sailed with Paul.



FEW days afterwards, Cineas had a visit from Carbo again, and this time he was accompanied by his son Julius. The latter was of about the same age as his friend, and wore the dress of a Roman Centurion. He looked much like his father, but there was more refinement in his face, and courtesy in his bearing. Cineas was outside as they rode up, and hastened to meet them. Julius flung himself from his horse, and tenderly embraced him.

"Health and happiness, my dearest friend," said Julius.
"How rejoiced I am to see you again, and here too!"

"Health and joy, dear Julius, and a thousand welcomes :

" 'Who has restored thee back,—a Roman,
To native gods, and this Italian clime?'

as your Horace says ; but come,—

" 'Come, let the vow to Jove be paid,
And rest, beneath my laurel shade,
Thy war-worn frame ; nor spare the wine
Reserved for thee, best friend of mine !'

"What !" exclaimed Julius, laughingly, as he entered the house arm in arm with his friend, "you condescend to quote a Latin poet, do you ?—you fanatical Greek !"

"Oh, on such an occasion as this, I would be guilty of any extravagance. With Horace,—

" 'I'll be as frantic as a Bacchanal.
'Tis sweet to laugh, and play the fool,
When welcoming a friend within my hall. "

The three were soon in the house, and reclining on couches, and wine was placed before them. Cineas plied his friend with questions. He had much to ask him, for he had not heard from him since they were in Athens together.

At length Cineas inquired by what fortune he had come to Rome.

At this question the manner of Julius underwent a change.

“Cineas,” said he, “my adventures on this voyage are the most marvellous that I have ever known.”

“Tell me about it by all means,” said Cineas, with much interest.

Julius thereupon began :

“There was a certain remarkable Jew in Palestine when I was there, named Paul. This man was distinguished for his bold and ardent advocacy of a new religion. In preaching this he had endured pains and perils without number. At last, his enemies got hold of him, and he was subjected to a trial. In the meantime he had used his rights as a Roman citizen,—he was a native of Tarsus,—and appealed unto Cæsar. Festus would have freed him if it had not been for this appeal ; as it was, he sent him to Rome, with some other prisoners, and I was appointed to accompany them.

“I was struck by the first sight of my prisoner. His genial and courteous manner, his uncomplaining disposition, and thorough kind-heartedness, would of themselves have commended him to me. But there was something more in him, for behind all this there was a solemn, earnest purpose, the aim of his life.

“He loved to converse with any one who was at all accessible, and I soon found myself engaging in long discussions on those lofty themes for which you, Cineas, first gave me a taste,—the soul, immortality, and God. Never had I heard such sentiments as these, which this man had. At first, I compared him to

Socrates ; afterwards, I felt that all of Socrates' teachings contained nothing like these.

"He won all my confidence. I told him of my experience in Athens, of my reform, of your kindness, of 'the master,' and his teachings ; to all of which he listened with deep interest.

"After the usual course, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia, and there I found an Alexandrian vessel, on her way to Italy, laden with grain. In this vessel we all embarked."

Then Julius proceeded to give an account of one of the most memorable voyages on record : the dangers of the sea ; the harbour of refuge sought once, and afterwards forsaken ; the dreadful storm, before which the frail bark was driven helplessly ; the despair of all on board ; the heroic attitude of the one man, who, by his words, inspired all the others with calmness and fortitude and hope. He told how they were at last driven ashore, and not a life was lost, but all were saved, as Paul had foretold. Then he spoke of the wonderful acts of Paul in Melita, and the astonishment of all who witnessed them. After which he asked Cineas,—

"What do you think of that ? and all this I have seen with my own eyes.

"It is amazing !"

"It is true, for I saw it. It is the power of that God, Cineas, whose servant Paul is."

Cineas said nothing.

Julius resumed his narrative :

"We spent the winter on the island, and many and many a scene occurred there, which I never can forget. During this time Paul spoke more particularly to me of his great doctrine, for which he had toiled so long, and suffered so much. Those three months must always be remembered by me ; and I have many things to tell you, Cineas, which must be reserved for another time, for I need a long time to talk with you, over such important things as these.

“But I will bring my narrative to a conclusion. We remained on the island about three months, and then, as the winter was over, we embarked in the *Castor and Pollux*, and arrived, after a time, at Puteoli. Thence we came to Rome.

“He seemed to have many friends here, who were expecting him, for numbers came to meet him, some even as far as Appii Forum and the Three Taverns. The meeting showed that this remarkable man had inspired among them the warmest sentiments of devotion.”

“Have you seen him since?” asked Cineas.

“Yes,” replied Julius, “frequently. Indeed, my guardianship was not altogether ended till a few days ago, when I took him to Burrhus. He was well received. Burrhus himself respected him, and allowed him to live by himself, with a soldier that kept him.”

“I heard from Burrhus of this interview,” said Cineas.

Julius looked surprised.

“I was in Rome a few days since and saw him. He spoke in high terms of this man.”

“He is a marvellous man. His ascendancy over others is wonderful. I heard a noble speech which he made before Festus and King Agrippa. They were charmed with his noble bearing and eloquence. On board the ship he exerted the same influence over all, from myself down to the meanest sailor. His attitude during the long and frightful storm was noble. Never for an instant did his courage falter. His calm face always preserved a lofty serenity; and when he spoke, it was always with a cheerful smile. In the darkest hour, when despair filled the hearts of all, he stood unmoved, as though he was in perfect safety. For my part, I think I have as much courage as ordinary men; but here was a man who, while we were mourning, and expecting every moment our last hour, stood among us with such unquailing steadfastness, that the very sight of him inspired courage into us.”

"He ought to be a Roman," said Carbo. "He is a man of the right sort. I care not what his accusers say of him, he is the highest type of man."

"Such a man," said Julius, "as answers the noble description of Horace,—

"The upright man, the man of iron will ;
Nor civil fury urging on to ill,
Nor raging despot's angry frown,
Can cast his steadfast spirit down ;
Nor the fierce wind that rules the Adrian Sea,
Nor Jove, when all his lightnings are set free,—
Though all the world to ruin roll,
He views the wreck with fearless soul."

"But he had something more than mere courage," he added, musingly ; "he had that spiritual power to sustain him which made him superior to other men. By that supernatural influence he was enabled to foretell our deliverance, to save himself from the most venomous of reptiles, and to heal the sick by his touch."

"He is a wizard," said Carbo. "He draws his power from some unhallowed source."

"Unhallowed? His whole life is hallowed, and all his thoughts and words. For, mark you, he does all this out of kindness and pity ; he is no wizard, seeking for gain. He is poor, and has often to work with his own hands for his bread."

"If he has this supernatural power, would he need to work ? Could he not turn stones into gold ?" said Carbo.

"He does not, at anyrate ; and yet I know that he has this power, for I have seen it. He never boasts,—never makes displays. But when the poor father carries to him the emaciated form of his child, or the weeping mother implores him to come and save her dying son, then his face lights up with an expression of more than human pity, and he goes, in his kindness and tenderness, to pray over the sick and save them. He says it is all done by the Deity, to whom he humbly prays ; that he is only a weak man, and of himself can do nothing.

"One of his companions told me many more things about

him. He told me of his wonderful travels over the East and Greece,—how he was sometimes stoned almost to death, and at other times worshipped as a god. This man, who was his companion, was himself an extraordinary personage, with much of the calmness and deep-set purpose of Paul; but he seemed to think himself as nothing in comparison with his friend.”

“Oh, this supernatural power is not so unintelligible!” said Carbo. “Didn’t Socrates have an attendant spirit?”

“The attendant spirit of Socrates was very different from this. It was a kind of inward monitor, which forewarned him of danger; it was not an active power like this, by which he could heal the sick.”

Cineas said but little. The wonderful story of Julius sank deep into his mind. Already this man Paul had been prominent in his thoughts. Now circumstances had thrown around him a new and stronger attraction.

“What are these great doctrines that you allude to with so much emphasis?” asked Carbo. “What is Paul? What does he teach? What is this new thing, for which he suffers so much and is ready to die?”

“I cannot unfold them fully just now,” said Julius. “He is, however, a Christian—”

“A Christian!” cried Carbo, interrupting him. “What! only a Christian!”

His face assumed an expression of mingled contempt and disappointment.

“I know them,—the curse of Rome and the offscouring of the earth. These are the men and the doctrines that are ruining the empire.”

“How?” asked Julius, mildly.

“Why, they practise abominable secret vices.”

“I know that to be false,” said Julius; “for I have attended very many of their most secret meetings, and I affirm to you that their object is a pure and holy one.”

"Well, then, they are at least cowards; they teach that fighting is wrong, that cowardice is pleasing to their God. Rome is effeminate enough already; but this doctrine is the very thing that can extinguish the last spark of manhood."

"My father," said Julius, calmly, as soon as Carbo had ended, "was this man whom I have been describing a coward? He, who shamed us Roman soldiers by his heroism in the face of appalling disaster, a coward? Would that there were more of them!"

"No," said Carbo, frankly; "he, at least, is no coward. Faith! nothing tries a man more than shipwreck."

"And, I assure you, the others are like him in this. You have heard the idle tales of their enemies; for, of all men on earth, the Christians have the least fear of death. In Asia many have had to suffer and die; and they always go to execution not merely with calmness, but even with joy."

"Joy?"

"Yes. Such is their religion that they are convinced that they will be happy for ever in heaven; and so they have no fear of death. Can such men be cowards?"

Carbo was silent.

For the remainder of the day, Cineas and Julius had much to say to one another. More conversation about the Christians followed; but Cineas had much to communicate about the absence of Labeo and the villany of Hegio. They separated in the evening with mutual promises to visit one another.

"And I will take you to see this wonderful Jew some day," said Julius, with a smile that did not altogether conceal his deep earnestness in this proposal.





VII.

The Syrian Learns a Lesson.



TEN weeks had passed away since the nurse was first taken sick, and she now began to recover the use of her faculties. Isaac, true to his promise, was unremitting in his care; and his skill was rewarded by success. He received the thanks and praises of Helena with equanimity, and continued his care with better prospects than ever.

When the nurse began to be conscious again of surrounding events, she recognized first of all the tender care of Helena. No words seemed sufficient to her to express her gratitude. She poured forth all the warm emotions of a generous heart to her mistress, and declared that nothing could be a sufficient return for so much kindness.

At times her thoughts would revert to that mournful event in her life which had been so bitterly brought before her recollection by Cineas, and Helena could understand the sadness which her face wore; but calmness would succeed, as other things came to her mind, and the usual serenity reigned upon her face, which distinguished it before. Helena was careful to make no allusion to this great sorrow, and refrained from touching upon any subject which might, by any possibility, be associated with it. She chose rather to talk to her of her recovery, and of the time when she could again resume her care of Marcus.

As for Marcus, his joy was unbounded when the nurse recognized him again. He had been deeply grieved that she had through all her sickness taken no notice of him, and had feared, in his childish way, that he had done something to offend her; but now returning reason and health brought back all her former affection, and he saw that she was unchanged.

"You are my own dear nurse again," he said, as he embraced her fondly and kissed her pale face. "And now you will soon walk with me hand in hand, as you used to do, under the plane-trees, and tell me about the dear God and Saviour, and all those wonderful stories. And oh, dearest nurse, I have forgotten none of them; but I have thought of them every night till I fell asleep, and then I used to dream of them till morning."

The nurse fondly stroked the boy's head with her thin hand, and tears came to her eyes.

"Yes, my sweet child; I have many and many stories to tell, and, if it be God's will, we will again walk under the plane-trees."

"And I will be a listener," said Helena, gently.

The nurse looked up inquiringly, with a strange and eager curiosity in her eyes.

"I have heard so much of your stories from Marcus," said Helena, kindly, "that I want to know more. Do you know what it is to have within you a longing and craving after some better source of comfort than this life affords? You do, you do! You can sympathize with me."

"With you, most beloved mistress?" exclaimed the nurse, her face now radiant with hope; "I would lay down my life for you. If I but dared to tell you what I know; if you would but listen,"—

She paused.

"My soul," said Helena, in low, earnest tones, "my soul longs for rest. There is One who alone can give it this. You

have found him. He is the one whose name you have murmured in your delirium, to whom you pray, on whom you rely. If I could but know what you know, and feel as you feel, then I could have peace. You must teach me this. You must talk to me as you have talked to Marcus. You must let me know your secret consolation."

The nurse trembled with emotion, and, folding her emaciated hands, she closed her eyes, and her lips murmured words of prayer.

"*'Bless the Lord, O my soul!'*" she said at last, in tones that thrilled through Helena. "*'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name.'* He has heard my prayers. He has awakened these dear hearts so that they long for him.

"*'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth exult in God my Saviour.'*"

Helena gently checked her.

"Not now, not now," she said. "You are too weak. The slightest emotion disturbs you and makes you weaker."

"O my dearest mistress," said the nurse, "this does not weaken me; it gives me strength."

"No. See how you tremble. Your poor heart beats as though it would burst."

"But if I talk to you on this it will make me calm. The very thought is comfort and peace."

"It is, it is; but you must keep that thought to yourself till you grow stronger."

"Oh, I long to talk to you about it now!" and the nurse, in her eagerness, tried to raise herself on her elbow. But she was too weak, and in a moment sank back again panting.

"There," said Helena, kindly, "you see how weak you are I am sorry I spoke of this now. When you are stronger I shall rejoice to hear you; but now I must refuse to listen. Think how angry Isaac would be if, after all his care and skill,

I should suffer you by my impatience to have a relapse. No, no. We must both wait."

"I will obey, then," said the nurse, faintly. "You know better than I do, and I will do whatever you say. But oh, what new comfort you have given me! If anything could make me recover rapidly, it would be this. It has driven away all my sorrow already."

The nurse fondly hoped that in a few days she would gain the strong desire of her heart, and be able to talk to her mistress on the great subject to which she had invited her; but she had mistaken her strength. Her aged frame had not that vitality by which one rallies rapidly from a severe shock; and, as day succeeded to day, even when improvement was going on, change for the better was not very perceptible.

"Mother dearest," Marcus would say, "how strange it is that my dear nurse should have to suffer so long! At first I thought that she was going to leave us, and enter that bright world where the angels and the holy children dwell; but she has not gone, and now, why does she not get well?"

Helena explained how, in such an old person, it took a long time to recover.

"I pray to God for her,—to my God and Saviour,—and that is the reason, I suppose, why she is getting better; and she wouldn't have got well at all if I hadn't prayed,—would she, mother?"

"I don't know, my darling," said Helena, not knowing what to say.

"But I find it hard to pray without her; that is, I did at first."

"How?"

"Oh, I don't know; but it used to seem when she was with me as if all the room was full of angels, and sometimes as if my Saviour was standing near me, smiling at me just as nurse used to smile. And when she was sick, the room was all

empty. But after a time the angels began to come again; and now, when I pray, I think God hears."

And so Marcus used to prattle to his mother, while a deeper longing than ever took possession of Helena's heart that she, too, might take part in such pure and holy communion, and be to her son what the nurse had been.

During all this time, the attention of Cineas was almost altogether engrossed with the investigations of Isaac, and the various plans which presented themselves for counterplotting against Hegio. After the outbreak with Carbo, Cineas took no notice of him whatever for a few days; but at length he summoned him before him. The Syrian made his appearance, his dark face more gloomy than ever. He performed the salutation in so disdainful a manner, that Cineas felt compelled to notice it.

"Fellow," said he, "when you come before your masters, you should demean yourself as becomes an inferior."

Hegio said nothing, and Cineas went on,—

"After your insolence to my friend Carbo, it would be no more than right to have you chastised and dismissed; but I do not wish to act unjustly, and so I have waited till my passion cooled, so as to deal with you properly."

"*You* have nothing to do with me," said Hegio, rudely. "You never employed me."

"After what has passed, it would be but just if I dismissed you on the spot," said Cineas, calmly. "As to my rights and power here, I think you are mistaken. I am the guardian of Marcus, and the controller of this estate."

"You?" cried Hegio, in amazement.

"To such an impudent knave as you, I don't know what concessions are to be made. You evidently don't know who and what I am. You don't appear to know that I could crush you and your miserable life in a moment."

"No," said Hegio, coldly; "I do not know that."

“In order to satisfy your mind fully, and free you from anxiety about the justness of my right, I will show you this document, which your master has signed. You will perceive that, under certain circumstances, he appoints me the guardian of his son, and absolute controller of all his property. The circumstances have occurred, and I have formally assumed my new duties. I am master here.

“Perhaps you think that I will revenge myself on you for your insolence. Not at all. You are altogether beneath my notice. You have risen from the lowest dregs of the populace to this position. I will be satisfied by thrusting you out of it.

“Perhaps your jealousy for the interests of this family may lead you to wonder how I am placed here with such powers. For I can sell all this to-morrow if I wish. I will condescend to relieve you of this anxiety. Marcus is not only heir to this estate, but to mine also. This is as nothing compared with what I will leave him. He will, at my death, be master of more than twenty different estates in Achaia; each of which would afford enough revenue to make the fortune of such as you. You see, then, that the heir and the estate of Labeo are safe in my hands. He leaves his son this estate and fifty slaves: I will leave him more than twenty estates and ten thousand slaves.

“You are a cunning scoundrel, but you have not managed well. It was your duty, as a scheming knave, to find out all about me. You would then have tried to get my good opinion. You made a great mistake when you dared to treat with insolence the owner of millions. I could have done better for you than even Tigellinus; for if you had tried, you might have cheated me with impunity. You can't cheat him.

“See, too, what a double fool you have been. You think you are the favourite and minion of Tigellinus. You know that your patron, to oblige a man of my wealth, would have you crucified to-morrow. Don't you know, or have you forgotten,

what wealth can do in Rome? Don't you know that this new patron of yours would sacrifice a thousand such as you, if by doing so he could get into the good graces of the master of millions, and hope for even a share of his will?"

The Syrian had listened to Cineas with deep and varied feelings. From the first, he had looked upon him as a Greek of noble birth perhaps, but like most Greeks, of limited means. So many Greek adventurers filled Rome, that the very name had become synonymous with pressing want and clever knavery. He thought that Cineas had come with an eye to this estate.

To his amazement and utter confusion, he saw what a fool he had been. At first he did not believe his assertion, but regarded it all as a vain boast. But when Cineas threw out at him the name of Tigellinus—a name already dreaded by all—when he mentioned it so slightly, with such an air of calm superiority, then he felt that Cineas must have all the wealth and power which he claimed. Then he saw the extent of his folly. Cineas had mentioned the very thing which most of all overpowered his mind. Wealth was his god. The powerful controller of millions was to him almost superhuman. His whole manner changed. His face assumed an expression of the deepest and most abject humility. Even Cineas was amazed at the change.

"Noble Cineas," said he, bowing down low before him, "I have severely offended you. If I can hope for pardon from you, I most earnestly implore it. Hear me,—

"My whole offence was what you call my insolence to your friend. Alas! I knew not that he was your friend. He came,—and you will forgive me if I say that he was a man of no very majestic or lordly air, such as your friend might be,—he came, and fiercely ordered me about, as though I were his slave. My quick temper rose. He beat me, and this maddened me. I even forgot myself in your presence, and most humbly do I

beg forgiveness for the momentary slight. I had been severely beaten, and was made mad with rage.

"Alas! I have no power with Tigellinus, and know not what you mean. I know well that a man like you can do what you please with a poor man like me. Spare me! My life is in your hands. On my knees, I ask that life of you."

And Hegio, in his abject submission, actually fell down and clasped the knees of Cineas.

His touch affected Cineas like that of a reptile.

"Rise," said he, coldly; "I don't want your life. I'm glad that you understand me so well as to know that I could easily destroy it if I wished. But I don't wish it."

Hegio rose and overwhelmed him with his thanks.

"Hear me," said Cineas, "and then go. As I am entering upon the care of this estate, I wish to know how its affairs have been since Labeo left. Make up full accounts of everything. Present them to me. Beware how you falsify anything. For I declare to you that if I suspect a single statement, I will have everything examined; and woe be to you if ever it comes to that! Now go!"

Hegio attempted to speak.

"Give me time—"

"Time? Oh, I will not hurry you. Take a month or two. Only remember what I have said, and beware! Now go!"

And Hegio, bowing low, left the room with a face of agony.





VIII.

“The Master.”

AMONG the many estates adjoining that of Labco was one belonging to Aulus Plautius, a man of high rank, who had made the first conquests in Britain under the Emperor Claudius. He had been governor there; and his conquests were extended by others until the revolt. He had seen hard service, and knew the Britons thoroughly. Helena had become acquainted with his wife on her first arrival here; but sorrow and sickness kept her much at home, so that there had not been much intercourse with them.

Her name was Pomponia Græcina. She was a lady of noble lineage and nobler character. While the nurse was slowly recovering, Helena was one day surprised and pleased to see Pomponia coming on a visit. Apart from the pleasure which she felt at seeing her, she had also a faint hope that some news might have been received from Britain. After the customary salutations, and some conversation of a general nature, Pomponia remarked,—

“I need not ask you if you feel anxious about your husband. I know well what it is to have such distress, for my husband fought against them, as you know; but at the same time, dear friend, I think there is every reason for hope.”

She then went on to tell Helena much that was in the highest degree comforting. She pointed out the peculiarities of

the Britons, their sudden attacks, their jealousies, and private feuds, their tendency to fall away from any common cause after a short period. She affirmed that her own husband thought there was not the slightest cause of fear for the army of Suetonius; but that with any kind of generalship at all it would inevitably overthrow the Britons and take vengeance upon them.

These words from such a source had much more effect than anything that had been said to Helena. They reassured her. Aulus certainly knew, if any one could, and his opinion was now worth much to her.

Pomponia was pleased to see the visible effect of her words in the heightened animation which at once appeared in Helena.

"Dear friend," said she, "the period when my husband was absent was the most remarkable in my life. Never shall I forget it. During his wars communication was sometimes interrupted and I was harassed by terrible anxiety. I did not know what to do or where to go."

"And how did it end? what happened?" asked Helena, as Pomponia paused.

"I used to offer up vows incessantly for my husband's safe return. But the gods of our religion always appeared in a fearful light to me. I did not believe the ordinary legends about them; but I had no other knowledge of them than this. I acted from a kind of superstition, and felt all the time that it was superstition only. My vows were made to a set of immoral demons, or else they were made to chance, or nothing at all. This was that which troubled me. But perhaps I am wearying you while thus talking about myself."

"Wearying me? Oh, no," cried Helena; "I long to hear it all. What mercy has sent you to me? I have felt all these doubts, though of a somewhat different nature, and even now am longing for something better than the common religion, or the Greek philosophy."

"Dear friend," said Pomponia, with deep emotion, "per-

haps you may be benefited by my story. I knew nothing of philosophy. I was but a simple woman, with no more than the common training—but I will go on. My maid used often to notice my distress, and at length perceived the cause of it, and all my wishes and desires.

“This maid was a Cyrenean, and had been with me for some time. Her religion was altogether different from mine. I never thought much about it, for every race has its own superstitions; and I fancied that hers were like all the rest.

“But I soon had reason to see differently. Gradually, and with the deepest respect, she began to speak about her religion. My attention was aroused and my interest excited. There was something in it that deeply impressed me. She spoke of one Supreme Being—the True God, who rules all and regards all things. She told how this One created men, but they sinned against him. She told how he pitied them even after they had sinned, and formed plans for their safety. She went on to tell me of many messengers whom God had sent to the world,—men of whom we in Greece and Rome have never heard, but who yet gave his messages to men in writings which yet exist. Above all, they told how One was coming who would make all things plain, and show to the world a new religion and a new hope.

“She had a scroll of many of these wonderful messages, from which she read words so full of love and mercy, so amazing in their meaning, and filled with such sublime ideas, that I felt in my very heart that they must come from heaven. Love and mercy from the great Deity! This was the thought that came into my mind, to remain there for ever. Then my maid read to me the strange announcements and prophecies of One who was coming. At last she read me a book which told that he had come.”

“That he has come!” cried Helena, clasping her hands, and turning to Pomponia more closely, with streaming eyes. “Oh,

how your words sink into my soul ! Who is he, and when did he come ?"

"That book which my maid read to me told a wonderful story of One who became man for our sakes, and lived in the world for years, and was finally put to death."

"Put to death !"

Helena repeated the words with an awful look.

"Ah ! dear friend, you have yet to learn the most wonderful story that ever was told—how he came and was born on earth ; how he lived and taught ; what loving words he said ; what gentleness and infinite pity dwelt in all his words and acts ; what immortal love sustained him through all that life of his. You have yet to learn"—and Pomponia's voice sank to a lower and more solemn tone—"how he was betrayed, and tried for his life, and beaten, and scourged, and reviled ; and, after suffering all possible indignities, how he was crucified."

These words thrilled through Helena. They were new to her. She had heard of the Christians, and had known that they worshipped One who had been crucified ; but never had thought of the full meaning of that fact. She had believed them to be an obscure and ignorant sect ; and until she knew that the nurse was one of them, she thought them immoral. But now their belief was presented by one whom she revered, in a way that filled her with mingled wonder and horror. Was this crucified One the One to whom she was seeking access ? Was this the One whom she had sought so long ?

"I will not tell this story in my weak words," said Pomponia ; "but let me give you that precious book, where all is told. I will bring it to you. You can read it then. It is for you. All that I found in it, when my maid gave it to me, you can find in it,—peace, hope, and blessings beyond all thought."

"Oh, bring me that book, if you have such a book," said Helena. "It is now the one idea and hope of my life to know something of him."

“Ah, dearest, in that book he says, ‘Learn of me, and ye shall find rest for your souls.’ There I found rest for mine, and have known it ever since.”

“And was this the trouble that you fell into afterwards, when your husband made that examination?” asked Helena, alluding to an event well known in Rome.

“Yes,” replied the other. “When he returned, I soon told him all. He questioned me somewhat about my belief, but did not take much interest in it. He seemed to respect the elevated and noble precepts of this religion. But some of his friends and some members of the family took offence because I would no longer take part in the usual services of the state religion, and endeavoured to excite ill-will against me. They circulated gross slanders about me, and caused me great grief. My husband found this out, and determined to put an end to it. He summoned a number of relatives, and tried me in their presence. I gave a full account of my religion and its precepts. My husband gave me a triumphant acquittal, and since then I have been molested no more in that way. I have my share of afflictions, and expect more. Yet I put my trust in him who has himself suffered so deeply; and in him I have found rest for my soul.”

There was a deep silence for a few minutes, when further conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Cineas. He greeted Pomponia with deep respect, and said,—

“I hope you have succeeded in driving away some of the anxiety of my sister. You have had the same fears in former years, and have found that they were groundless.”

“Oh yes,” said Helena; “since she has come, I feel as though part, at least, of the heavy load of anxiety had been lifted from my mind.”

“As I was coming in, I heard you speak about ‘rest for your soul.’ Do not let me interrupt such a conversation. Or, if it is private, let me retire.”

But they refused to let him go, and insisted that he should stay.

"Be it so, then," said Cineas; "and if I stay, I will take my part in the same conversation. Have I ever told you, dear sister, the concluding events in the life of 'the master'?"

"No."

"Well, then, if you would like to hear it, I will tell it now. It also explains, to some extent, the cause of my own journey to Rome, and will let you into one great purpose of my life. So I will make a full confession," said he, smilingly; "and I will make no apology, for I know that anything about 'the master' will not be tiresome, at least, to you, my sister."

So saying, he began,—

"You well know, dear sister, how pure and elevated were the doctrines of our sublime teacher. But you, noble Pomponia, may not know this, and so I will explain them.

"At the outset of his career, he had decided that all the best doctrines extant were comprised within the writings of Plato, and the best example for man could be found in the life and character of Socrates. These writings were his study, and this life his model. In that life he saw four great principles, which he always sought to obey in his own life, and to urge upon his disciples. These were,—

"1st, Self-denial.

"2nd, Doing good to all.

"3rd, Constant care of the soul.

"4th, Loyalty to God.

"If you have read of Socrates, you will see that, in all his words, and particularly in his 'Apology,' he lays chief stress on these. He used to urge us to self-denial by quoting the precepts of Socrates about temperance, chastity, and frugality. He used to stimulate us to a life of philanthropy by reminding us how Socrates went about doing good,—for thirty years employing himself in the effort to benefit all kinds and classes

of men ; neglecting his private interests, and giving himself up altogether to others. The care of the soul was recommended as the one great purpose of life, by which alone we could prepare for the spiritual life which follows this mortal one. ‘The soul, the soul,’ he used to say, ‘how it shall become most perfect—this is the only aim worthy of an immortal being.’ Ah ! how our hearts used to thrill, as he discoursed on the nature of God, and showed that the soul was like him in its nature, and ought to be like him in feeling and character ! How our hearts used to thrill, as he pointed out the best example of the soul prepared to meet its God, by describing the last hours of Socrates and his last discourse, when he held his disciples enchained by his divine words all through that day, and then, with hope and joy and enthusiasm, drank the poison and lay down—to do what?—to die ? No ; but to meet his God ! Then he used to turn from this triumphant scene to his memorable trial, and declare that the sublimest period in his life was not that glorious death, but rather those concluding words of his ‘Apology,’ in which he forgives his enemies. Here, he said, was the highest point ever attained by the soul of man in its effort to become like its Maker.

“Above all, ‘the master’ used to insist on loyalty to God,—absolute submission to his will. The lofty language of Socrates shows what ought to be the attitude of every soul. He told his judges that God placed him in Athens to preach to every man to take care of his soul, and he would die rather than quit his post. He affirmed that he would obey God rather than man ; and would refuse acquittal if it were granted on condition that he should be faithless to him. It was this, ‘the master’ affirmed, which was the highest triumph of this principle, that a man should thus identify himself with God, and think and feel and act as if always united with him.

“It was in this way that ‘the master’ understood ‘the divine voice’ of Socrates. He thought that God had mani-

fested himself to his follower; and so it became the highest purpose of his own life to attain to something like that divine presence in which it was the lot of Socrates to live. This was the purpose of his life, and he sought to inspire all his disciples with his own spirit. It was for this end that he took for his prayer that marvellous choral song of Sophocles,—

“ ‘ Oh that it were my lot
To attain to perfect holiness in every word and deed !
For which there are laid down laws sublime,
Which have their origin in highest heaven ;
Of which God is the father only,
Which perishable human nature has not produced,
Nor can oblivion ever lull them to sleep ;—
Great is the Divinity within them,
Nor ever waxeth old ! ’ ”

“ In the words of the same song, he maintained that self-love and the pride of our nature was the greatest obstacle to this fulfilment of God’s law, which is written in our hearts; and selected the words at the close of the antistrophe as the best summing up of all,—

“ ‘ Never will I cease to take my God as my guardian.’ ”

“ But about ten years ago a remarkable circumstance occurred, which gave a death-blow to his hopes, and filled his mind with gloom. It was the case of Philo.”

Here Cineas repeated to Pomponia the story which he had already told to his sister; the narrative of which excited the strongest feelings of that lady, especially when she heard of the nurse, and her sickness ever since. “ She is one of you,” whispered Helena,—“ a Christian; she has found peace—she trusts in your God—she has promised that I should learn of him.” Pomponia pressed her hand, and looked unutterable things; while Cineas, too much absorbed in his own thoughts to notice this conversation, went on with his story.

“ Here, then, was a case which showed that all his philosophy was useless. It became a problem which disturbed his life,

and darkened his soul. It was the dark spectacle of the foulest sin, followed by the gnawings of insatiable remorse. It is a wonder that this never occurred to him before. Perhaps it did; but then it was only theory, and it was this one fearful fact on which his philosophy was wrecked.

“How can God pardon sin? This was his question. He had fondly hoped that Plato was sufficient for every case. He thought before that to turn away from sin—to reform—was enough. He now learned that there is the distress of the soul, which no reform of life can of itself destroy. He had to acknowledge that here Plato failed. He had nothing for such a case. And if Plato failed what others were there?

“He knew of none.

“He gave himself up to deeper thought and meditation; but the despondency of his mind affected his health. It was to him as though the foundation on which all his hopes had been reared had crumbled to dust beneath him.

“As I was his favourite disciple before, so now I became his sole associate. For he gave up teaching now, altogether, declaring that he knew nothing and had nothing to teach.

“‘The greatest blessing which God can give to man,’ he said to me once, ‘is the knowledge of truth. But how could that knowledge come? Man cannot find it out for himself. Plato shows all that can be learned by man himself—the highest knowledge that he can possibly attain to. No philosopher since Plato has gone further than he, or found out anything in addition.’ He reminded me of that passage in the *Phædo* with regard to the immortality of the soul, where Plato makes Simmias virtually confess that man can only go to a certain point, and beyond that, he needs some help from a higher source. ‘For we ought,’ says Simmias, ‘with respect to these things, either to learn from others how they stand, or to discover them for ourselves; or, if both these are impossible, then, taking the best and the most irrefragable of human reasonings,

and embarking on this, as one who risks himself on a raft, so to sail through life, unless one could be carried more safely, and with less risk, on a surer conveyance or on some *Divine Word*.’

“This passage he used often to quote, till we both used the term as a well-known formula, expressing some power from heaven, greatly to be desired, which should make all things plain.

“But, as the months passed on, he grew feebler, and there was nothing that could rouse him from his deep depression. I saw, at last, that he was dying.

“And so, at last, he passed away,” said Cineas, in a scarce audible voice. “He left me—my friend, my more than father; and, as he lay in my arms in that last hour, the last words that I heard him speak were,—

“‘O God, reveal thyself!’”

There was silence for a long time. Cineas was the first to break it.

“Alas,” said he, “all life and all religion are full of perplexity! What can make it vanish? Never can it, till we arrive at that other life in which we all believe. Then we shall know the truth. Do you remember those noble lines of Pindar, Helena, that we used to sing when we were together in our dear home in Athens? Let us sing them again, dearest sister, and carry our hearts back to childhood, and our thoughts up to heaven.”

At this invitation, Helena rose, and took a lyre that lay upon one of the seats. Then, after a brief prelude, she sang the following, while Cineas accompanied her:—

“In the happy fields of light,
Where Phœbus with an equal ray
Illuminates the balmy night,
And gilds the cloudless day;
In peaceful, unmolested joy
The good their smiling hours employ.
Them no uneasy wants constrain
To vex the ungrateful soil,

To tempt the dangers of the billowy main,
Or break their strength with unabated toil,
A frail, disastrous being to maintain ;
But, in their joyous, calm abodes,
The recompense of justice they receive,
And, in the fellowship of gods,
Without a tear eternal ages live.”

“‘Without a tear eternal ages live!’” repeated Helena.
“There are no words in all our literature equal to these. Oh,
for that life! But how can we find it?”

“God will lead us, dear sister,” said Cineas.

And, as Pomponia looked at these two with their earnest
hearts, her eyes filled with tears, and she breathed a prayer that
God would indeed guide them to that knowledge of himself
which is life eternal.





IX.

The Return.



FEW weeks afterward they were seated in the room, when an unusual disturbance suddenly arose outside. There was the quick tramp of horse-hoofs and the shout of the household servants. Helena turned pale as death, and, starting up, staggered toward the door, like one in a dream, murmuring some inarticulate words. Cineas dashed past her, and hurried out, but was encountered by a man in the costume of a Roman officer, who rushed into the room, and, without saying a word, caught Helena in his arms. He strained her to his heart, as though he would never part with her again. Not a word was spoken. All stood mute. Sulpicia looked earnestly at the new-comer, and all her boasted Roman fortitude gave way completely. Large tears flowed down her face, and, clasping her hands, she looked upward in ecstasy. Helena did nothing but weep and sob and cling to the one whom she loved so fondly. At last her husband quietly disengaged himself, and fondly embraced his venerable mother. Then he looked around for his son.

“Where is Marcus?” said he, and that was the first word he spoke.

“There,” said Helena, pointing to where Marcus stood.

The little boy stood at the end of the room, with a pale face and a strange mixture of joy and bashfulness in his expression. Tears stood in his large, spiritual eyes, which were fixed on his father.

"My darling!" cried his father, and, seizing him in his arms, he covered him with kisses. Marcus clung to him, and hid his face on his shoulder for a moment, then took another long look at him, and hugged him again and again, twining his arms about his neck. Labeo then, carrying his son in his arms, went to greet Cineas, who had just entered. Their greeting showed their warm-hearted affection.

All was joy. Labeo had a kind word for all. He gave orders for universal festivity for three days, and sacrifices, and then came to the room to answer all the questions that every one was eager to ask him.

He was very tall, with a magnificent head and strongly marked Roman features. His frame was most powerful—only less than gigantic; and his whole mien and tone showed that he was accustomed to command. In him there was less intellect than in Cineas, but more force, or, at least, more appearance of it. He was the ideal of the Roman—strong, resolute, and self-contained—a representative man of the race which had conquered the world.

Yet this strong man—this Roman—had a depth of affection which cannot easily be described. All his heart seemed to yearn over his wife and child. He never let Marcus leave his arms, but held him there while he sat, and carried him about while he walked. Marcus, too, returned his father's affection with equal intensity. He seemed to rest in his father's arms in perfect peace, with the air of one who had nothing more to wish for. Helena sat on one side of him, clasping his arm, and pressing it to her heart; while Sulpicia sat gravely on the other, not yet having regained all her self-control, but often stealing a look, such as a mother only can give to her idolized son, with the usual stern expression of her face softened into a milder one.

Labeo had much to tell them. He had emerged from behind clouds and darkness into the light of home; he had come back

as though from the dead ; and the events of that dark period were full of interest to all.

He told about the march of his army to Mona, their destruction of the stronghold of the druids, and the confidence which they all felt that the country was completely subjugated. He described the surprise and horror that filled every mind when they heard of the rising of the Britons, and the fierce thirst for vengeance that rose in the minds of the soldiers.

“Although the accounts were exaggerated by fugitives, yet none of us for a moment ever doubted that we could restore affairs, and punish the enemy. We at once marched back across the island to London, only meeting with scattered bands of barbarians. Here Suetonius at first intended to collect the scattered bands of our soldiers from different garrisons ; but we heard that an immense army of Britons was approaching. Suetonius was determined to gain a decisive victory, and so he resolved to fall back, till he received more reinforcements. We gave up the town, but allowed all the inhabitants, who wished, to come with us. The Britons came after us as we fell back. At last, all the scattered soldiers had joined us, and our army amounted to ten thousand men. Then Suetonius resolved to fight.

“He chose a spot surrounded by woods, with a narrow opening, and a thick forest in the rear. An open plain was in front. Here the Britons found us, and prepared to attack. They brought an incredible multitude, and were so sure of victory that they placed their wives and children in waggons within sight, where they might behold the valour of their husbands. This is a common practice with these Northern barbarians ; for their women encourage them by their cries.

“Boadicea went round among them in her chariot, with her two daughters, telling her people of her wrongs, and urging them to vengeance. The Britons were all wild with disorder, dancing

and gesticulating violently. We were all eager, but calm ; for we knew how it would end.

“The Britons at last came on all together, wildly shouting, and showering their arrows against us. They fell upon us at the narrow opening, and soon were thrown into confusion by their own ardour. Seeing this, Suetonius drew us up in the form of a wedge, and ordered us to charge. We went down into the wild crowd with irresistible fury. Everything gave way before the solid masses of our heavy-armed legions. The light troops followed. The cavalry charged into the midst of the enemy, cutting them to pieces everywhere. The Britons, who were always confused, now became tangled in a dense mass, and filled with the wildest disorder. At last, they turned and fled. But, when the fugitives reached the edge of the plain, they were arrested. There a line of waggons was drawn up, and on the waggons stood their wives, with their children, like so many Bacchantes, crying, screaming, imploring, motioning their husbands back, beating their breasts, tearing their hair, and cursing the men for cowards. The Britons tried to rally, but it was impossible. Thousands stood their ground, fighting fiercely till the last. The women themselves took part in it, and fought even with the waggon-poles. But after all it was not a fight ; it was a slaughter. Beside those waggons, Camulodune, London, and Verulam were well avenged. Men, women, and children were all killed, and even the cattle were sent after them. Eighty thousand were killed, and the rest of the army were scattered to the winds, disorganized and terrified fugitives. Yet, in the whole fight, we did not lose over four hundred men.”

“And what became of Boadicea ?”

“After trying to rally her men, she found that all was lost. She then drove away from the field of battle, and took poison. Her body was afterwards found. Never was there more terrible vengeance, or a more complete victory.

“After the victory I was selected to bring the laurelled letters of Suetonius to Cæsar. I am the first to bring the joyful tidings here. I arrived here last night, and had to wait for an audience.

“When I was brought before Cæsar, I found him in high good humour. He had just heard that one of his poems had gained a prize at some Greek game. His first words to me were,—

“‘Congratulate me, Labeo. I am the happiest of men. I have gained the lyric prize!’ and then went off into an enthusiastic eulogy of Grecian taste and Grecian literature. At length he recollected my errand, and said—‘Your message has come at a happy time, indeed. I defeat the Britons and gain the lyric prize on the same day. Can anything be more auspicious?’”

“I murmured some assent or other, but he did not listen,—something in my attitude seemed to strike him as I stood before him. He looked at me narrowly. Then he rose and walked slowly backward and then forward, holding his head on one side, and looking at me as if I were a piece of art.

“‘By the immortal gods!’ he cried at last. ‘Don’t move for your life. Accidental, too. Why, I declare to you, I wouldn’t have lost that attitude for ten million sesterces. Don’t move for your life. By Jove! it is Hercules, at his apotheosis.’

“He then summoned one of his attendants, and made him draw my figure in its peculiar attitude; occasionally giving directions, and all the time charging me not to move.

“Then he resumed his seat, and looked at me as before, with half-closed eyes. I felt much embarrassed, but could do nothing. I certainly did not expect to excite the admiration of Cæsar in such a way.

“He then went on to tell me that he was having a colossal statue made representing himself, and that something in my attitude had suggested the very thing which he wished for his

statue. While talking in this way he assured me that I must remain in the palace. He would give me a part in the household service.

“I contrived to insert a word about my family, and my desire to see them. He at once assented, laughed, and said I might stay as long as I liked ; and finally asked if I were fond of music, and whether I would like to hear the piece which had gained the prize.

“I assured him that I would.

“He then reverentially took a lyre that was near, and with far more seriousness in his face than he had yet exhibited, proceeded to sing and play an extraordinary composition which I hardly understood. My perplexity showed itself in my features ; but Cæsar thought it was admiration, and was pleased. I do not know now how I could have got out of it ; but we were interrupted by the entrance of a beautiful girl, who came up to Cæsar with much familiarity, and the air of a spoiled child.

“‘How tiresome you are to keep me waiting,’ she said. ‘It is two hours.’

“‘Two hours,’ cried Cæsar. He forgot all about me, and, without any further notice of me, he walked away. After waiting a short time, I took my departure, thinking myself very fortunate in the moment which I had found for my arrival.”

“And didn’t he ask a word about Britain, or the battle?” asked Helena, in wonder.

“Not a word. He cares nothing for Britain, or battles,” said Labeo, with a smile. “But what a lucky thing my attitude was ! I will certainly be promoted now.”

There appeared to be a general desire to avoid the subject of Cæsar. Each one had his own thoughts, and those thoughts were not always fit to utter. There were many associations which clung to the name of Nero, and made it an uncomfortable theme.

"I have enough stories to last you for a year, little boy," said Labeo, fondling his son. "All about the savages, and their wicker boats; and how they paint their skins; and their chariots with scythes sticking out that can cut a man in two; and the horrible Druids with their sacrifices. We will sit all day under the plane-trees and talk, and you will learn how Romans fight."

"And I am going to be a Roman soldier," said Marcus, his eyes glistening with pride, "like my brave father; and I'll fight battles too—some day."

Labeo looked with fond pride on his little boy. That boy was a thorough Greek, with not a trace of the Roman about him, with the spirituality, the delicacy, and the sensitiveness of his mother. Perhaps this dissimilarity to himself only made the father love the boy more.

"Tell me all about Britain," said Marcus, nestling closer in his father's arms.

"Britain," said Labeo, "oh, it's a wonderful country. First, there is the sea. Every day it rises and comes up in a great flood all along the shore, and then all the water goes back again. That is a great wonder, for there is nothing like it here. Our sea is still, you know."

"Yes," said Marcus. "I saw the sea rolling in once; and I played on the beach all the day till it went back again."

"Oh, you remember that day, do you? Well, it wasn't very long ago. But let me tell you some more wonders. They say that far up in the north there is a place where in the summer time it is always light, for the sun does not go down."

"Why, where does it go to?"

"It goes behind some mountains, I suppose," said Labeo, doubtfully; "but, to tell the truth, nobody could ever tell where it went to. And then again, in the winter it is dark almost all the time."

"Is that in Britain?"

"No; this is a country far away from Britain, and it is called Thule."

"Was any one ever there?"

"No; but merchants have sailed near it, but they could not see it very well, on account of snow-storms."

"I suppose in that dreadful country there is always snow."

"Yes; nothing but snow and ice. The sea is all covered with ice. It is very hard to row a ship along. Some people say that all the water is thick and heavy, and never rises into waves; but I don't know, for I never found out any one who had been there."

"Do any people live there?"

"Oh, they tell all kinds of stories about that. Some say giants live there, who dress in fur. Others say that nobody lives there at all. You see that no one knows anything about it. Some people say that Britain extends for thousands of leagues till it is all mountains of ice, with snow-storms always raging. Other people say that it is an island, with this sea of thick water on the north. Perhaps we may find out some day. We can send a fleet around it if it is an island."

"I am glad you are not in Britain, and I hope you'll never, never go back again," said Marcus, after a pause.

"Why?" asked Labeo.

"Because it is full of savages and snow and ice; and I hope, if you go away again, you will go to some country where you can always keep us all with you."

"Were you afraid," said Labeo, looking at his son with inexpressible fondness, "that you would never see your father again?"

"Oh, no," said Marcus. "I knew you would come home." He spoke in a positive tone, and shook his head in a confident way, as though doubt were impossible.

"You knew it?—why?" asked his father, curiously.

"Because I always prayed to God, and I knew he would hear me."

"Prayed to God!—to what God?"

"To my God and Father."

"Your God and Father?" asked Labeo, wonderingly.

Helena looked at her child with a fond smile, knowing well the sweet formulas of his innocent, childish faith.

"To my God and Father, who loves me. I always pray to him, and he hears me always. And he has heard me. And you have come back. And I will thank him."

Labeo looked at his boy, long and silently.

"What do you know about God?" he asked, with strange gentleness in his voice.

"All that he has done for me," said Marcus, "and promised. He is so good. And I see him often in my dreams."

"The boy is as strange as ever," said Labeo to his wife, after a pause. "He talks like Theophilus, but more divinely. Theophilus told what he thought or hoped; but Marcus tells what he knows. It is from you, my sweetest Helena, that this marvellous boy inherits this lofty spiritual instinct. I am more material than ever. When I am away from you, I am merely the Roman soldier. Now that I am with you again, my most adored wife, you can bring me back to my better feelings. You can tell me of 'the master.' I'm afraid, though, that the memory of 'the master' is dearer to me, because it was when I was his disciple that I loved you."

Helena's eyes glistened with the pride of a wife who knows how well she is loved. That strong Roman heart, wherein so much valour and might was present, beat only for her. That lofty and noble spirit, whose devotion had been tried for years, was all her own. Her heart, long stricken, was at last at peace.

The arrival of Labeo changed everything. The household gave itself up to rejoicing. Helena moved about with a light, elastic step, always with her husband, or following him with her eyes. Cineas shook off the load of responsibility, which had pressed heavily upon him, and showed the lightness and

buoyant spirits of a true Athenian. The three felt as though they had gone back to early youth—to boyhood and girlhood. They forgot, for a time, all the cares of life.

After a time, Labeo thought of presenting himself before Cæsar again, and Cineas decided to accompany him. He had felt no desire to do so before ; but now, since all his anxiety was over, he was curious to see Nero with his own eyes, and perhaps somewhat playfully desirous of trying the force of the advice of Burrhus—"Be a poet !"

Accordingly, the two went in company, and obtained access to Cæsar without any difficulty.

He was sitting at a table, as they entered, with a reed in his hand, and parchment before him, on which he was transcribing something. His head was thrown on one side, and his eyes were upturned and half-closed, with the expression of one lost in thought.

He was of medium size, with a face somewhat fleshy, which presented rather a swollen appearance. His eyes were large and fine ; his under-jaw was moderately broad ; his lips thin. On the whole, he looked like a dissipated man with a turn for sentiment. There was nothing in his appearance which marked him as cruel or vindictive ; for Nero's atrocities arose from perfect heartlessness, rather than from violent cruelty. He was utterly indifferent to suffering. He could inflict agony, and turn lightly away to art or literature.

As Cineas looked at him, he thought of Agrippina—of others, whose names were on the popular lip, and whose fate was only whispered. He could see no trace in this man of the one at whose name the world already turned pale.

Nero suddenly looked toward them with a smile of recognition, which was even fascinating.

"What ! my Hercules—and you, my Athenian—you are Antinous. Friends too. You see I know all about you. But how is it that Cineas—the Megacleid, the Athenian, the poet,

the philosopher—should have been so long in Rome without coming to me ?”

Cineas smiled, and, with easy grace, excused himself. He spoke of his great anxiety about his friend, which had depressed his spirits, and prevented him from having that gaiety which alone was fitting for the presence of such a man as Cæsar. But so soon as Labeo had arrived, he had hastened to him.

The delicacy with which Cineas insinuated his compliment, consisting, as it did, more in the tone than in the words, gratified Nero. He spoke in Greek, of which language the emperor was a master, and his fine accent and elegant language gratified the imperial taste. Here was a man who, even in his first address, seemed to throw all his other courtiers into the shade. Besides this, Nero had a kind of enthusiasm for Greek antiquity, and a Megacleid was grander, in his eyes, than the noblest name in Rome.

“You were right,” said Nero ; “you shewed the true Athenian delicacy.” He then went on to speak about poetry and metres, quoted Pindar, and occasionally took up his lyre, to show the proper way of singing certain verses.

Cineas was complimentary ; but Labeo was silent, not knowing exactly how to express himself under these unusual circumstances. But his silence rather pleased Nero, who did all the talking, and was content, just now, at any rate, with a good listener.

Finally, he informed Cineas that he had invented a new system, by which Latin poetry should be all revolutionized.

“Your poetry,” said he, “is original. Ours is not. You developed the genius of your own language. Our poets imitated yours. Our best poems are only imitations. Yet our language has certain beauties in which it is superior to yours. These have always been neglected by our educated classes. It is reserved for me, by the propitious fates, to draw this excellency up from its obscurity, and place Latin poetry on its proper foundation.”

Cineas expressed great curiosity to know what this might be.

At this moment, another person entered the apartment, and after saluting the emperor, was motioned to a seat near him.

He was an elderly man, of middling stature, with a refined countenance, and somewhat venerable mien. But about his features there was a certain worldly-wise expression, which smacked of shrewdness and craft, that rather detracted from his otherwise reverend air. On the whole, he had much dignity ; and when the emperor, in a courteous manner, introduced the two friends, he saluted them with winning courtesy.

This was Seneca, the former tutor of Nero, his master in philosophy and literature, whose influence was now on the wane, but who yet was a privileged character at court.

"I am about to describe my discovery in poetry," said Nero, with some importance. "It has been reserved for the master of the world to bless it in the most important way—its literature."

He took up his lyre and struck a few chords in a half-abstracted way, and then resumed,—

"Our Latin tongue has certain qualities which make it surpass even the Greek. One is, its richness in sonorous words of similar sounds. It is difficult for the poet to avoid them, they are so frequent. Ovid is full of them. But our poets, in everything but elegiac verse, avoid this recurrence of similar words."

While he chatted on in this way, Cineas thought of nothing but Agrippina, and the ship of death, and her last words to her assassins. He thought of Seneca, when his advice was asked about her assassination. He felt as though all this terrific story must be a dream.

And still Nero went on chattering about metres.

"Our own original poetry," said he, "bears many marks of this. We began right. Our poets should have cultivated it.

In real music of verse we might then have surpassed your poetry, Cineas."

Cineas nodded, but said nothing.

"Cicero felt its beauty," he went on to say. "He admired it. If he had had sufficient poetic genius he might have anticipated me ; but it was reserved for me,—yes," he repeated, "it was reserved for me. You will find examples of it in his writings. The common people love it. This shows that it belongs to the language. Listen to some of their songs, and you will perceive this recurrence of similar sounds at the end of verses."

He paused for a moment, as if trying to recall something, and then turning to Seneca, he said,—

"I believe my memory is bad to-day. Do you repeat those verses of Cicero—you know what I mean—something which begins, 'Priamo,' I think."

"Hæc omnia vidi inflammari
Priamo vi vitam evetari
Jovis aram sanguine turpari."

Seneca repeated these lines in a meek voice, laying stress on the rhymes.

"Yes," said Nero ; "now repeat those others beginning 'Cælum nitescere.'"

"Cælum nitescere, arbores frondescere
Vites lætificæ pampinis pubescere
Rami baccarum ubertate incurvescere."

Seneca repeated these lines, indicating the rhymes as before, but evidently not sharing Nero's admiration.

"You see," said Nero, "how melodiously our Latin language can convey those assonant sounds. It is magnificent. That is true poetry."

He paused for a while, and took up his lyre in an affected manner. He struck a few chords, and then looked around for applause. All expressed their pleasure in a complimentary way.

“To show you the admirable effect of this assonance, when joined with really good poetry, I will read you some of my lines.”

Saying this, he took up the parchment before him, and read the following,—

“Torva Mimalloneis implerunt cornua bombis,
Et raptum vitulo caput ablatura superbo
Bassaris, et lyncem Mænas flexura corymbis,
Evion ingeminat; reparabilis adsonat echo.”

“Notice,” he continued, proudly, “the fine effect of this assonance of syllables *mi malleonis* and *bombis*, *vetulo* and *superbo*; and so two in the alternate lines, *bombis* and *corymbis*, *superbo* and *echo*. This is the thing with which I intend to revolutionize our Latin verse.

“But I have no cordial supporters,” he said, pettishly. “All the literary men are carried away by prejudices. The Greek models enslave them. I admire the Greek poetry above all things; but I think that something might be done to make Latin poetry have some original excellence.

“Perhaps it is a blessing for the world,” he continued, “that I, who am an emperor, should be such a lover of literature, and have genius for music. By this means I can advance them. If I had been but a humble Roman, I might then have been happier. I would have produced some great epic poem—better than Lucan’s *Pharsalia*, at any rate. But I am what I am; and I give my genius for music to the world.

“But even as it is, I can show that the cares of state are unable to repress the efforts of genius. Amid all my troubles my lyre is my best consoler. There is no power like that of music. You shall see what a proficient I am. Shall I give you Pindar?”

And without waiting for an answer, he struck the wires, and, throwing his head back in a languishing way, he sang the

noblest lines of ancient poetry, of which the following is the best representation, though only a paraphrase :—

“ Oh ! sovereign of the willing soul,
Parent of sweet and solemn breathing airs !
Enchanting shell ! the sullen cares,
And frantic passions bear thy soft control.
On Thracia's hills the lord of war
Has curbed the fury of his car,
And dropped his feathered lance at thy command.
Perched on the sceptred hand
Of Jove, thy magic lulls the feathered king,
With ruffled plumes and flagging wing ;
Quenched in dark clouds of slumber, lie
The terrors of his beak, and lightnings of his eye.”





X.

The Hope of the Jews.

IT was not the smallest part of Helena's joy that the nurse began to recover health and strength with greater rapidity. Day after day found her improving. The return of Labeo made her share the prevailing happiness. She obtained greater self-control, and was no longer subject to that excessive agitation which had before retarded her recovery.

When she heard of Labeo's return, she murmured, "It is all his love. He makes you happy again, and brings back your husband. And for me, too, though I have been sorely distressed, he has his own peace and rest."

She now talked of one theme to her mistress. Day after day she talked of Him who loved us and gave himself for us. Helena listened, and gradually found herself sharing the views of the nurse. Perhaps, if left to herself altogether, the return of her husband might have mitigated her eagerness to learn of Christ. But here was one who never ceased to think of him. And so it was that, although her sorrow had departed, yet her desire after the truth remained.

The nurse undertook no argument; she only described. Women often go by intuitions, or by a certain instinct, which leads them to see what must be right. The story of the incarnation was thus unfolded to Helena. Not only did it seem to her to be more worthy of God than the speculations of philo-

sophy or mythology, but it seemed to her to be the only theory worthy of him. Out of all this there stood one great idea, which came with stronger and stronger force to her mind, till it reigned there supreme, till it drew all her belief. This was the great truth that God loves.

Here was that in which the nurse found all her comfort. The dealings of God with man left in her mind not a shadow of doubt about this. And all was summed up in Christ. She told to Helena all the story of the Revelation from the first, and all had reference to this.

“God has always loved the world. He made it for happiness, and he works for its happiness.” Thus she would go on to say, “The creatures whom he made turned away from him, and we have all sinned against him; but he never forgot us, or despised us. He loved us so that he came to us to save us. He came and lived as I have told you, and consented to die to save us.”

“Rest comes at last,” she said, at another time. “All the sorrow and all the sighing and all the suspense of life shall cease. I shall see him. I know he will not cast me off at last.” Tears started into her eyes. “Because I have put my trust in him, and in grief I have only clung more closely. Out of the depths I have cried.

“The dearest thought to me is that my Saviour was the Man of sorrows. There was never sorrow like that sorrow. And amid it, he knew what it was to look on a broken-hearted mother. Out of all, he brings this for me, that I may know how wondrously he loves. O Sorrow, and Love, and God! What have I to do but to give myself all up to him in whom all these were united, and wait till he calls me home?”

Home, rest, peace, heaven. All these words dwelt so constantly on the lips of the nurse that they lived in Helena’s mind, and she, too, gained that sublime idea of the future. For the nurse assured her that heaven was the solution to the

mystery of earth, and that those who loved God had no home here, but yonder.

In that room Pomponia, the wife of Plautius, often made a third. Helena soon had an opportunity to read the precious manuscript of which she had heard so frequently. In that simple story, with its divine words and its momentous events, she saw new displays of the character of that One whom she sought. She heard words which sank deep within her heart ; she saw actions which thrilled through her being. And out of it all there came forth, more sublimely than ever, the great truth of all truths to her,—God loves.

She found herself drawn gradually to One who thus became precious to her. She wished to give herself to him. To go to him, to confess, to pray, seemed to become a necessity of her nature. A new bond of union grew up between the mother and the boy. Now they could sit together, and talk of those things which both loved. The manuscript was there, from which Helena could read, and Marcus could listen, till he knew all.

These gradual changes went on almost imperceptibly. Helena often spoke with her husband about these things, which were prominent in her thoughts. Yet, with all their strong mutual love, there was little intellectual sympathy between these two. Labeo gave his wife all his heart, and loved her with tenderness and the most single-minded devotion. Her love for him was equally intense. But in mind, these two went in different paths. Helena and Cineas were so completely in accord that they could sometimes pursue the same train of thought, so that one could tell what the other was thinking of. They looked at things in the same way. But the husband and wife were different.

When Helena spoke of her feelings or the trials of her mind, she said much that was almost unintelligible to her husband. He listened, and often caressed her, and told her that she was

too subtle and too much of a Greek ; playfully scolded her for worrying about trifles, and wondered what she wanted of new discoveries in religion. It was all mystery. It was impossible to understand it.

He gave it as his opinion that the Supreme Being never intended that men should fret themselves and drive themselves mad about the unseen world. If he had intended us to speculate these matters, he could easily have told us something definite.

“For my part,” he continued, “when I was under the influence of ‘the master,’ and young and impressible, with nothing serious in life, and with my divinest little Helena to make all things glorious, then I had a taste for these speculations. Yet even then I loved the doctrines of ‘the master,’ because I saw in them something definite. He taught me what was my duty to my friends, my enemies, my family, and my country.

“But do you not see how impossible it is to obtain any result when you go beyond morality, and practical duty? All philosophy is confused. No two systems or branches of systems are similar. It is fit only for young students who wish to exercise their wits, or for men of literary leisure, who have nothing in particular to do.

“I was a youth when ‘the master’ taught me. I am a man now—a Roman soldier—ambitious, energetic, resolute in my aim to rise in life and elevate the family. I have lost all the taste I ever had for these speculations, and would far rather read a dispatch from Corbulo than a treatise by Seneca. And I would not give Cæsar’s commentaries for the whole body of Greek philosophy.

“But with you it is different,” he continued, in a proud, fond tone. “You are spiritual. You are as far before me, in taste and subtlety, as I am before you in bodily strength. I love you all the better for it. I love to hear you speak of these things. I never heard anything like your voice. But, to tell

the truth, it is all the same with me, whatever you speak of. I listen as I listen to music. It is the tone that I hear."

There never was a more unpromising subject for spiritual conversation. Indeed, such conversations invariably ended in the same way. It all turned off to the subject of their mutual love, and each thought the other was dearer than ever.

Now, with Cineas and Helena, though they were so very much alike, there were differences. Cineas was an earnest inquirer after truth, and sought it under all forms. He had heard the Christian doctrine explained, to some extent, by Julius, and yet he found it not acceptable. His mind was possessed of larger resources than Helena's. He reasoned more. He felt doubt and hesitation where she felt none. The partial knowledge which he had gained left him where he was before.

Happening to be with Isaac one day, he mentioned something about the Christians.

Isaac at once exhibited strong excitement. Cineas inquired the reason.

"I hate them!" said Isaac, fiercely.

"Why? They are not hateful."

"They are to a true Jew. They are the followers of a false prophet, who was tried for treason, and crucified. But their worst fault is, that they seek to rob us of our dearest hope."

"How is that? What is your dearest hope?"

"The restoration of our independence, and our triumph over men."

"Do you then believe that it is possible for you Jews to become the masters of the world?"

"With God, all things are possible," said Isaac, solemnly.

"I know," said Cineas, "all that your sacred books declare about this. But this very thing is an obstacle to me. How can we Greeks believe in a book which only promises this?" He thought of "the master's" search, his experience, and his disappointment, but said nothing of this to Isaac.

“God chose us out,” said Isaac, calmly, and with lofty emphasis. “Ages ago he raised up Abraham, our father, from whom we are descended. A nation arose from that man—the friend of God—and this nation has always stood apart, the followers of God and his favourite people. All our history is interwoven with him. He has been our guide. We are oppressed now—a subject people ; but we have been far worse. It has been his will to guide us in a way which seemed dark.

“ ‘Clouds and darkness are round about him ;
Justice and judgment are the habitations of his throne.’

“Praised be his holy name !

“We have been enslaved, afflicted, led into captivity. We have endured calamities which would have crushed any other people. But he has been faithful. He has chastised us so as to bring us back to him. After the chastisement, we have ever returned to him, and said, ‘Praised be his holy name.’

“Amid it all, he has cheered us by his sublime promise. He has told us that, in the course of ages, a time would come when all our sufferings would end. One would appear, who should lead us into perpetual rest. Through him we should triumph. His holy reign should be extended over all the world. All nations should be blessed in him ; yea, all nations should call him blessed. Then the presence of the Most High in the holy city should be adored over all the earth. Jerusalem should become a place of pilgrimage, and he should reign over all. This has been our hope.”

“You speak,” said Cineas, “the thoughts of a Jew. Can the rest of the world consider it a blessing from God that a Jew should reign over them ? Why should I prefer Rome to Jerusalem ? The Roman is just. The whole world is at peace under his impartial and powerful rule. If we Greeks want anything from God, it is our old independence—the days of our ancient glory.

“If I look at your sacred writings, one thing repels me, and

it is the very thing which gives you so much joy. I do not want a conqueror. Philosophy tells me something better than this. If you looked upon your writings with our eyes, you would not believe in them. It is not the just and worthy part of a holy God to give a revelation to man that tells nothing more than this.

“You speak about a chosen people, and you tell of your wonderful history,” he continued, while greater animation expressed itself in his words. “Where, I ask you, would one look for a chosen people? The Romans have a better claim than the Jews. They have risen, from small beginnings, to the empire of the world. Is not that the favour of God? If the favour of God means conquest over a world, then the Romans are his people. They have conquered even that place which you consider his own holy city.

“If I were to search for the chosen people, I would find a nation which has done something more than win battles. The grandeur of the mind is greater than that of the body. The Romans are material; but the Greeks are intellectual. The philosopher tries to look at God and spiritual things from a spiritual point of view. He will not allow himself to be overcome by vulgar display. The Greek mind is to him the most marvellous thing on earth. We have humanized men, and taught them all things. We have given them knowledge, art, literature, music, philosophy,—all that is best and highest in life.

“We have taught men how to think. Our state is now subject to Rome; but the mind is free, and Greece rules the mind of the world. What is it to be chosen of God, if this is not? If he does anything for the government of the world, this must surely have been his doing. Thus, you see, I can say something too about a chosen people. I am sorry that I have had to boast; but you made it necessary.”

“Noble Cineas, all that you have said is true,” answered Isaac, calmly. “But you have not said enough. I might allow

that God had raised up the Romans to conquer the world, and banish wars among different states ; and that he created the Greeks to rule over the human mind. He gave to the Romans material power, to the Greeks intellectual. Is there nothing more to give ?

“ There is. There is a power greater than even the intellectual, and this is the spiritual. This he gave to the Jews. He formed us for this. He trained us for this, and moulded all our natures so that we should show forth this.

“ What is this spiritual power ? It is the capacity to understand him—to believe in him. To have firm faith in the Unseen ; to worship the Spirit. This is the character of our race. We adore the Invisible, and need no idols to represent him. It is not thus with a few philosophers, but with the whole nation. The humble, illiterate peasant, the rude artisan, the wild fisherman, among us, all cherish this sublime belief in the existence and the presence of the one God. Such a people appear nowhere else, and if they did not really exist, the thing would be pronounced impossible by those who know only the ordinary races.

“ He formed us, chose us, set us apart, trained us to be his people. As his people we have lived. All his dealings with us have had reference to this. Where we showed a tendency to forget him, he has brought us back. When we have actually practised idolatry, he has chastised us. We have thus lived through many ages, and while all the world was dark, we have had the true light. We have had the truth, and have carried it always down to the present day.

“ But there is something more than this in our history. We have carried it thus far, but it has been made known to us that we were to have a far grander mission. For age after age the promise has been made, and reiterated under the most solemn circumstances, that at some time in the future One would come who would find us all prepared, and would extend over the

whole world the worship of the God of Abraham. Then we should receive the reward of our suffering, we the chosen, the trained people, would follow our Messiah to this sublime conquest. We should participate in all. As we had shared the sorrow, so should we share the joy. Since our God had subjected us to strife, he would finally give us glorious victory.

"This is why it is right and just in him to make us the rulers over the earth. Our rule under the Messiah would be better far than that of the Romans. The time shall come when all this shall be. There shall then be no tyrannical governors, no distressed and plundering armies, no oppressed nations rising up in rebellion. Our God shall change the face of nature itself in that day. The desert shall give birth to verdure. The wild beasts shall grow tame. War shall be known no more, but God shall reign in his holy hill of Zion."

Cineas said nothing; all this was to him the fond extravagance of a Jew. These sacred writings then had nothing more than this. This was his thought, and some disappointment came over him. He thought that Isaac would know, if any one did, and Isaac's explanation was not agreeable.

"All our writings are full of this," said Isaac. "These prophecies have become the joy and support of our people, and this is why we wait and suffer on. This is what they say. Listen."

And Isaac began:—

"Sing, O Heavens; and be joyful, O Earth;
And break forth into singing, O mountains;
For the Lord hath comforted his people
And will have mercy upon his afflicted.
But Zion said, "The Lord hath forsaken me,
And my God hath forgotten me."
Can a woman forget her sucking child,
That she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?
Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.
Behold! I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.
Thy walls are continually before me."

Isaac stopped for a moment, and sighed, then he repeated

the last few lines, while his eyes glistened with emotion. Then he went on:—

“ Thy children shall make haste : thy destroyers
 And they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee.
 Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold :
 All these gather themselves together and come to thee.
 As I live, saith the Lord,
 Thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all as with an ornament,
 And bind them on thee as a bride doth.
 For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction,
 Shall even now be too narrow, by means of the inhabitants ;
 And they that swallowed thee up shall be far away.
 The children which thou shalt have after thou hast lost the other
 Shall say again in thine ears :—
 “ The place is too straight for me,
 Give place to me, that I may dwell.”
 Then shalt thou say in thine heart :—
 “ Who hath begotten me these ?
 Seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive,
 And removing to and fro ; and who hath brought up these ?
 Behold I was left alone,—these, where had they been ?”
 Thus saith the Lord God :
 Behold I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles,
 And set up my standard to the people ;
 And they shall bring thy sons in their arms ;
 And thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.
 And kings shall be thy nursing fathers,
 And their queens thy nursing mothers ;
 They shall bow down to thee with their face towards the earth,
 And lick up the dust of thy feet ;
 And thou shalt know that I am the Lord,
 For they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.—
 Shall the prey be taken from the mighty,
 Or the lawful captive delivered ?
 But thus saith the Lord :
 Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away,
 And the prey of the terrible shall be delivered,
 For I will contend with him that contendeth with thee,
 And I will save thy children ;
 And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh,
 And they shall be drunken with their own blood as with sweet wine ;
 And all flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour
 And thy Redeemer—the mighty One of Jacob.”

In repeating these lines, Isaac seemed again, as on a former occasion, to lose sight of his companion. He was like one who utters a soliloquy. The comfort, the triumph were all his own. There was something in these words that did not fail to

affect Cineas. The tender relation which they portrayed between a chosen people and their God, seemed to warrant Isaac's lofty belief in the destiny of his people. That destiny seemed to be proclaimed in unmistakable language, yet the idea was repulsive to the Athenian. Mere material triumph, conquest, victory, however great in its result, was not to his mind the highest action of Deity. It was to vulgarize the sublime conception of the Infinite Mind. It would be to make of Jerusalem merely another Rome. And why should he, an Athenian, see anything divine in such a plan?

"Behold," said Isaac, "the picture of the future. All is told us plainly; on this we rely. The Messiah will come and lead us to all this."

"It is very grand in its way," said Cineas; "but still I can see nothing worthy of the Deity in such a plan. If this were figurative; if your Messiah were a teacher; if his conquests were those of Truth; if he taught the perfect good, and perfect fair, then it would be worthy of God."

"A teacher!" said Isaac, in indescribable tones; "a new teacher! What could such a one do? Teachers without number have come. Prophets and priests have spoken the words of God. What have they done? Nothing. Even among us, the chosen people, their voices have scarcely been heard. No, we need something grander; we need a mighty potentate, who shall lead us on to triumph, amid mighty miracles like those of God. He will lead us through the sea, which shall open to let us pass, and all the elements shall fight with us against our enemies."

Cineas looked at him with deep disappointment in his face.

"And is that all? Is that the end of your divine revelation? Why, beside that, Plato is indeed divine. Socrates is a God beside such a Messiah. For your promised leader would only fill the earth with terrible wars, and all mankind would be convulsed."

"But think on the grand end of all."

"The grand end of all! To have Jerusalem instead of Rome for our capitol. This idea of fighting, and marching, and conquest, is merely one which affects the vulgar mind. What does the Divine Being want of all this? You make him one who would sacrifice all the nations of the earth for a spectacle. That might do for the ruler of Olympus, not for the god of philosophy."

"His conquest," said Isaac, without heeding the evident disappointment and slight asperity of Cineas—"His conquest will exalt his people. It will fill the earth with his glory. The end of all will be happiness for all. Earth shall receive a new Golden Age, and he shall reign—over all."

"And in the midst of his grandeur," said Cineas, "such a one would be far inferior to our Great Teacher, as he stood up on his death trial, and told his enemies how he forgave them all."

"Your Messiah on the throne of Jerusalem, the conqueror of a subject world, surrounded by his Jewish armies, would fall beneath the attitude of Socrates in his prison, when he took the cup with an enthusiastic smile, and drank off the poison. I have no admiration for this conqueror of yours. Tell me that your prophecies of triumph are figurative. Tell me that his victory is over the soul, and then I will look for the Divine in your writings."

"No," said Isaac sternly, and with eager positiveness. "Impossible. They are literal, or nothing is true. Take away that literal truth, and all the hope of ages dies. Then the Jews have been mocked. To suppose the Messiah a figurative conqueror over the mind of man, is to insult us in our degradation. No! No!" he repeated in a kind of frenzy, "I have been tempted to think it so, but it is past. I hold on to the word of God, to his promise. He who chose us out, and subjected us to such long suffering, never meant to mock us with such a

shadow. He who bade us hope never meant thus to deceive us and break our hearts—never!—never!

“This,” he continued, after a pause, and with a bitterness in his tones that Cineas had never known before, “this is why I hate the Christians. They are the ones who present this mockery, this phantom, before us, in all its hideous bareness. Listen.

“A man came who pretended to teach some new doctrines. He gained followers. Any man can get followers, no matter what he says. These disciples of his pretended that he was the Messiah. He pretended the same. He said he was descended from our Royal House, and was King of the Jews. He was tried for this, condemned, and executed.”

Isaac gnashed his teeth as he came to this. His rage made him almost inarticulate.

“What—what can you think was the result of this? Did his followers disperse? No. They dared to get up a new deception. They dared to say that he had arisen from the dead; and still continued with a thousand-fold more zeal than ever to proclaim that this malefactor was the Messiah.

“The agonising part of all this to a Jew was the hideous appearance of reason which their arguments possessed. They referred all our prophecies to this man. They took—all—all—all. They are the men who say that in these prophecies all is spiritual, and that the Messiah has come as a teacher, to convince the minds of men.

“Worse than this. They take all our hopes, all our aspirations, all the promises of our God to us, his chosen ones,—they give all these to other alien races. They proclaim the teachings of their crucified Master to all races, and teach that the Jew has no greater privileges or hopes than any other man. The worst of all their teachers is this Paul, who is now in Rome—who glories in this doctrine—a renegade Jew, an apostate, a traitor to his country, a betrayer of his God.

“Alas for the agonies, the long, long agonies of our race, if it is to end in this ; if the hope of our final triumph is thus to be dashed to pieces by him who inspired us with it ! But no. Never, never will I let the tempter rob me of my faith in him ! Though he slay me and my race, yet will I trust in him ! He will fulfil his promise. He will bless his people. I will praise and bless his holy name as long as I live.

“No—no ! He will do what he has said. For our prophets have clearly indicated the time, and that time is at hand. We expected him years ago, but now he must come soon. All the events that now occur show this. The Jews are all in the attitude of hope and expectation. They watch for his coming. But oh ! it breaks the heart to wait, and wait, and still say, ‘Will he never come ?’ ”

Isaac paused, and then clasping his hands, he raised them over his head, and, with streaming eyes, he cried out :—

““Oh, that thou wouldst rend the heavens—
That thou wouldst come down—
That the mountains might flow down at thy presence,
As, when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil,
To make thy name known to thine adversaries,
That the nations may tremble at thy presence !
When thou didst terrible things that we looked not for,
Thou camest down ; the mountains flowed down at thy presence.
For, since the beginning of the world, men have not heard nor perceived by the ear,
Neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee,
What he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.””

He paused for a moment, and then resumed,—

““Thou hast hid thy face from us,
And hast consumed us because of our iniquities ;
But now, O Lord ! thou art our Father :
We are the clay, and thou our potter,
And we are all the work of thine hands.
Be not wroth very sore, O Lord ! neither remember iniquity for ever.
Behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people.
The holy cities are a wilderness ; Zion a wilderness ; Jerusalem a desolation !””

Isaac buried his face in his hands, and was silent for a long time. Cineas marvelled at the words which he had spoken.

The depth of humiliation, the sad confession of sin, the mourning over a nation's woe, which they expressed, was blended with a lofty confidence in the Deity, which seemed to express, even in the depths of sorrow, an unfaltering trust. Still he felt that Isaac's words expressed a desire after a great conqueror, some king who should reduce the world to subjection under Jerusalem. He wondered why such an idea still kept its hold of a people who saw before their eyes the resistless power of Rome.

At last, after some time, Isaac looked up. He was calm. A melancholy smile was on his face.

"I know not how to apologize," said he, "most noble Cineas, for my extreme agitation. The subject which has been brought before me always excites me, in spite of myself. I lose my self-control. Pardon me, I was going to bring to you to-day the result of my examinations. Hegio has to account for ten million sesterces. From what I know of his affairs he is well able to make it good. See," said he, and he took some tablets which he placed before Cineas, "here is the result."

Isaac then began to explain the accounts, and showed to Cineas the whole course of Hegio since the family had come from Britain. It showed a deficit such as he had stated.

Cineas took the tablets, and said,—

"It will have to be refunded in some way ; Labeo shall see that it is all made good," and then took his leave.





XI.

The Steward Punished.

HEGIO had long since found out the terrible mistake he had made in setting Cineas at defiance. After the memorable interview with him, he had made inquiries, and found out that Cineas was indeed all that he had stated, and even more. His wealth, learning, nobility, and reputation made him one of the most distinguished visitors to Rome. Had he been anything except an illiterate freedman, he would have been familiar with so splendid a name. Even his patron, Tigellinus, could only call him a fool, and assure him that he would rather have Cineas for a friend than an enemy.

The return of Labeo added to his consternation. For Labeo came back in triumph and in honours, the herald of a great victory, the bearer of laurelled letters. His reception by Nero was said to have been most flattering. Promotion was before him, and favour and advancement at court. Before such men Hegio was nothing.

In his speculations he had lost money and made it. But the sum which he had abstracted from the funds of Labeo was large, and might be discovered on a strict examination of the accounts. If a crisis came and all was discovered, he would have to refund. He could not run away. In the Roman empire there was no place for flight. The arms of the Government extended everywhere; and a man like Cineas could seize Hegio in the utter-

most parts of the Roman world. If he could not make good his default, the direst punishment was before him. Tigellinus would not interpose in such a case ; in fact, such a man as Hegio, when in misfortune, was beneath his notice. He could only conclude to be guided by circumstances, and if his defalcation were discovered, make it good as far as their demands might extend.

At last the end came.

One morning Labeo sent for him, and he obeyed the summons. It is a singular fact, that Hegio, with all his impudence, stood in very great awe of Labeo, and dreaded him more than any other man on earth. Perhaps it was the physical superiority of his master, his stature and strength, his iron frame and massive build ; or it may have been his stern Roman nature, with all its restless energy and indomitable will. These qualities were the very ones which distinguished Labeo, and were feared by the Syrian. Or it may have been some mysterious presentiment that this man would one day be the dispenser of his fate—an inexplicable forecast of the future ; a second sight, as the saying is, of things yet to be. Whatever the cause may have been, Hegio had this awe of Labeo ; and in their interviews he never, in all his life, had looked his master fairly in the face ; but usually on such occasions kept his eyes fixed on the ground, and owned the influence of a stronger nature.

When he appeared, he found Labeo stern and severe. All was known, for Cineas had told him all. Hegio soon saw that there was no hope. By some means or other, unknown to himself, Labeo had discovered the full extent of the deficit.

Hegio at once resolved to yield. He did not see how he could do otherwise. The position of Labeo rendered a conflict with him impossible ; and he had resolved, if the worst came to the worst, to sacrifice everything, for he well knew that no other course was possible.

So when Labeo presented to him the statement of his affairs,

and questioned him as to his disposal of various moneys, Hegio said that he had used his revenues for the benefit of the estate. The whole amount which Labeo thought a deficit was safe. His speculations had not been fortunate, but there had been no loss. All was secure, and was available at any moment. Labeo dryly informed him that such speculations were not what he had wished, and that his steward had no business to run any risk by using his money in such a way. His duty was to collect all revenues, and take care of them, not to speculate, or to risk it in wild adventures in Africa.

To all that Labeo said, Hegio simply responded that all was safe ; that he had made no wild speculations ; that he had only done thus for the good of his master, and could account for every obol. In fact, the whole thing ended by the repayment of the missing money, and Hegio left his master, penniless.

Penniless, but filled with thoughts of vengeance. For Labeo dismissed him ; sent him away ignominiously ; threatened to destroy him ; forbade him from ever coming again into his presence ; and all the bitter hate of Hegio was roused, and he retired from the estate, deeming himself a ruined man, and swearing within himself to wreak some revenge for all this if ever the fates should give him the power.

So Hegio was got rid of.

On the day when this occurred, Carbo paid a visit to the house of Labeo. He heard of the event.

“So your scoundrel has gone. Well, let him go,” said he ; “let him go and join his fortunes with those of Tigellinus. He will make a better employer than your noble Labeo. Oh, these Syrians ! these Syrians ! the city is full of them ! All Syria has come to Rome, and brought here their language and manners and customs, their drums and dancing girls. This is the curse of Rome. Am I not right in flying from these ? Ought I to live in Rome when men like Hegio may have a higher place than I at the table, and enjoy the favour of the great ? Men

like this can succeed there. They flatter, they favour, they worm themselves into the confidence of great houses, they control their affairs, and look down with contempt upon honest, old-fashioned Romans."

"It must have taken all that he had in the world to make up that deficiency," said Cineas. "He can have nothing left."

"Oh, he has plenty—plenty. The rogue has not speculated for nothing. And suppose he is poor, he can soon grow rich again. He will insinuate himself into the confidence of some one else. These are the men who gain power and influence now. Rome is no place for honest men, or for poor men if they are honest. All poor Romans ought to emigrate. But fortunately all the world is not in Rome. There are plenty of places where the old-fashioned simplicity may still be found. There's Præneste and Gabii and Tibur, where no one need be afraid of their houses tumbling down or burning up. But one lives in Rome at the risk of his life. Why, a great part of the city is only kept up by props. The scoundrel overseer orders some dangerous gap in the wall of a house to be carelessly plastered up, and goes his way. The next day down tumbles the crazy old edifice and crushes the family. Think of the fires at night. I believe Rome will all be burned up some day. I wonder how it has escaped so long. But now things have come to such a pass, that I sometimes look toward the city and see a dozen houses burning almost every night in as many different localities. This don't do for a poor man, for he loses his all. It's very well for a rich one, though. Let some rich man burn up his house, and the next day all his friends send him rare presents,—statues, vases, pictures, ornaments of gold and silver, books, and even money. Your rich man gains better things than those which he lost; but everybody understands the trick. When Rome is burned up, it will be done by rich men. I only hope they may all be burned out together.

"There's no government in Rome. A poor man goes out

after dark at the risk of his life. Then, windows are thrown open as he goes along, and ponderous fragments of crockery are pitched out into the street. I always feel thankful when I find that nothing more than the contents of these vessels are thrown down. But that is nothing. One's life is in danger now from far more serious causes. The city at night is given up to bands of miscreants, who roam the streets drunken and quarrelsome. If they see a very rich man, with a long train of attendants, they know enough to keep away from him ; but if they meet a poor man unattended, then they fall on him, and all that he can ask or pray for is that he may be allowed to get home with one or two teeth left in his head. This thing is worse now than ever. The young men make a business of it. Such an one feels miserable unless he has knocked somebody down ; he can't sleep at night for grief. The greatest men are the worst ; and I am not afraid to say that the worst one of all is Cæsar."

"Cæsar !" said Cineas. "Do you mean to say that he roams the streets, and knocks people down ?"

"Can anything that Cæsar does be surprising ?" returned Carbo, with a world of bitterness in his tone. "Is any crime, any infamy, too great ? But it is not safe to begin to speak on such a subject. Rome has a ruler at last worthy of it. But this is a thing that cannot endure for ever. Julius had his Brutus ; Caius his Chærea ; Nero will find his fate in some one whom the gods will send."

Carbo was venturing upon dangerous ground ; but he prided himself on his freedom of speech. He assailed most vehemently the character of Nero, told all the stories of his unspeakable crimes, and denounced vengeance on his head. It was with some relief that Cineas saw him go ; for he feared that some of the servants of the house might overhear the furious old man.



XII.

The Amphitheatre.



MARCUS had never been at the amphitheatre, and his father determined to give him what he thought would be a great amusement. So one day he took him there. It was before the days of the famous Coliseum; but this edifice was of colossal size, though it did not possess the grandeur of its successor.

As they entered and took their seats, a wonderful scene presented itself. All around were the numerous seats, filled with myriads of human beings, of all ranks and ages. On the lower seats were the better class of the population, while the populace were further away. Upon a raised seat at one extremity was the emperor.

Several fights had already taken place, and, as they entered, there was a short pause. Soon the fights were resumed. Some hand-to-hand combats took place, with various weapons. In the first one, the fight was ended by one of the combatants striking another to the heart. Marcus saw the blood spouting forth; he saw the man fall dead; he heard the roar of acclamation go up all around him.

He hid his face against his father's arm, and shuddered.

"Father, I want to go home."

He gasped out this, in scarce audible tones, as his father bent down to ask him what was the matter.

"Why? Are you sick, dear boy?"

"Yes; I cannot look on and see men killed."

"Oh! is that all?" said Labeo, with a feeling of relief. "Never mind. You'll soon grow accustomed to it. Remember you said you were going to be a brave soldier. So you must begin now to see men fighting and killing one another. You are a Roman."

Marcus shuddered, and clung more closely to his father.

"Come, dear boy, look up. They are fighting."

Marcus summoned up all his childish resolution, and forced himself to look again upon the scene. But the sight of the struggling men, covered with blood and dust, and panting and howling in the rage of the fight, was too much for him. Again he shivered with horror, and buried his face in his father's breast.

"I cannot! Oh, I cannot!" he sobbed.

"Come, my own boy, I know you are not a coward," said Labeo, after a long pause. "Come, be a Roman boy! See, all the men have gone away, and they are going to bring forward the wild beasts. Come. Try to look at this."

Again Marcus raised his face, and seemed to tear it away from its shelter, and force his eyes, with all his strength, to survey the scene.

He saw the arena, with only one man upon it. This man stood in the centre, with his face toward them, armed only with a short sword. He was tall, broad-shouldered, and powerfully built. His magnificent frame showed a splendid muscular development. He had light hair, which was long, and hung down in thick masses. His face was stern and bold, and, as he looked around upon the spectators, his whole manner indicated a calm and lordly indifference.

"I can tell you all about him," said Labeo, thinking to divert his boy's feelings from that horror which had so overwhelmed him. "I can tell you all about him. He is a Briton. He was captured by our soldiers, and sent here among the

prisoners. He has been in training for some time, and all Rome is excited about him. He promises to be a fine gladiator."

Labeo was here interrupted by a loud roar, which came from the *vivarium*, where the wild beasts were confined. Labeo expected that Marcus would be terrified at this; but, to his surprise, the boy jumped to his feet, with glistening eyes, and, in eager excitement, looked to see where it came from.

Roar followed roar.

"Are you not afraid?" asked Labeo.

Marcus did not hear him. Labeo did not understand the delicate sensitiveness of his son. It was the sight of human blood—the death of men—that horrified him.

Soon iron gratings were flung open, and a tiger bounded forth. He had not had any food for several days, and his ferocity was terrific. He stood for a moment, with glaring eyes, lashing his sides. Then he saw the Briton.

He uttered a savage growl.

The Briton eyed him calmly. The tiger, with a wild bound, leaped toward him. Finally, he crouched, and then, with a tremendous spring, leaped directly at him.

But the Briton was prepared. Leaping nimbly to one side, he struck a short, sharp blow. It was fatal. The huge beast gave a frightful howl, and, with a convulsive spasm, fell dead upon the sand.

A loud roar of applause rose, like a thunder-peal, from the vast assembly. Marcus shouted with the rest, and clapped his hands.

"My own brave boy!" said Labeo, proudly. "I knew you would like it at last."

"Yes; but oh, father, not where men are killed! It is too fearful."

"Wait and see," said Labeo.

The carcase of the tiger was drawn away, and again the

creak of a grating, as it swung apart, attracted attention. This time it was a lion. He came forth slowly, and looked all around upon the scene, as if in surprise. He was the largest of his species—a giant in size—and had long been preserved for some superior antagonist. He seemed capable of encountering two animals like the tiger that had preceded him. Beside him, the Briton looked like a child.

The lion had fasted long; but he showed no fury like that of the tiger. He walked across the arena, and completely around it, in a kind of trot, as though searching for escape. Finding every side closed, he finally retreated to the centre, and, putting his mouth close to the ground, he uttered a roar so deep, so loud, and so long, that the whole amphitheatre vibrated at the sound.

The Briton did not move. Not a muscle of his face changed. He carried his head erect, with a watchful expression, and held his sword ready. At length the lion turned full upon him, and the wild beast and the man stood face to face, eyeing one another. But the calm gaze of the man seemed to give the animal discomfort, and fill him with wrath. He started back, with his hair and tail erect; and, tossing his mane, he crouched for the dreadful spring. The vast multitude sat spell-bound. Here, indeed, was a sight such as might not be often seen. The dark form of the lion darted forward; but again the gladiator, with his former manœuvre, leaped aside and struck. This time, however, his sword struck a rib. It fell from his hand. The lion was slightly wounded; but the blow only served to rouse his fury to the highest point.

Yet, in that awful moment, the Briton lost not one jot of his coolness. Perfectly unarmed, he stood before the beast, waiting the attack. Again and again the lion sprung; but each time he was evaded by the nimble gladiator, who, by his own adroit movements, contrived to reach the spot where his weapon lay, and gain possession of it. Armed with his trusty sword,

he now waited for the final spring. The lion came down as before; but this time the Briton's aim was true. The sword pierced his heart. The enormous beast fell, writhing in pain. Rising again to his feet, he ran across the arena, and, with a last roar, he fell dead by the bars at which he had entered.

But, though victorious, these efforts had told upon the gladiator. He lay down, resting upon his arm and looking upon the ground. His heavy panting could be perceived from the seats above. For the lion had allowed him scarce a breathing space in that dread encounter, and he was now utterly exhausted.

But the Romans never knew mercy. The attendants came forward, and among them was a man armed with a helmet and sword. They threw a net and trident to the Briton, and left him to a new opponent.

This was the armed gladiator. He was an African, as robust as the Briton, and of equal agility. There was no pity, no mercy, no such sentiment even as a sense of fair play, among a people who could thus consent to match in battle a man wearied with two most fatiguing contests and one who was altogether fresh.

The Briton slowly and wearily rose to his feet, and took the net and trident. A third battle was not expected, and he seemed to lose spirit. He made an effort, however, and threw the net at his adversary. It missed. The Briton then ran, and the African followed. It was one of the most common contests of the arena; and had the Briton been fresh, he might have conquered. But he ran slowly, trying to re-arrange the net for another throw. The African, fresh and agile, gained on him at every step. At last the Briton turned, and raised his net to throw. The next moment the African plunged his sword into his side. The Briton fell.

At that stroke a loud, wild shriek arose. It came from Marcus. He flung himself into his father's arms.

"Oh, save him! save him!" he gasped. "Get him away! save him!"

Labeo tried to soothe him, but in vain. The boy repelled his caresses with a passion of sorrow, and only cried, "Save him!" as before. So Labeo took Marcus in his arms, and left the place, with the intention of seeing if anything could be done.

Meanwhile the Briton lay where he had fallen, the African standing over him. It was a case where the spectators should decide the fate of the vanquished. The African looked up. The Briton, too, after a few minutes, struggled up, and leaned on his arm, with his drooped head gradually sinking down again,

"And from his side the last drops ebbing slow."

A roar of acclamation had greeted the victory of the African, and some time elapsed before it subsided. With these inhuman spectators rested the fate of a brave man. It was soon decided. These spectators had conceived a high opinion of the Briton. Long had it been since they had seen such a victory over wild beasts as he had shown them. This lion which he had killed had been the terror of all the gladiators. They were not willing to lose so good a fighter. He should live; he should afford them more pleasure. They would let him recover from his wound if he could. So, as the African looked up, he saw the signal from all their hands, which meant life. He turned carelessly away, and the attendants, coming forward, raised the wounded man, and carried him off.

Labeo himself had been disgusted by the last fight. His life had been passed to a great extent in other countries; and, though he was familiar enough with the amphitheatre, yet he had not been able to become a regular attendant. He had not acquired the real cold-blooded cruelty which distinguished the common spectator. He felt interested in the Briton, and determined to do for him what he could.

Followed by Marcus, he went along the lower corridors, till he came to the gladiators' quarters. As he entered, he saw a confused scene. Gladiators were all around, laughing, quarrelling, or drinking wine. He took his boy in his arms, and asked some men near him where the Briton was. He did not know how the scene in the arena had ended; but he thought that he might have been spared, since he was too good to be thrown away. The men whom he spoke to pointed carelessly to the other corner of the apartment. Making a way through the crowd, he went there, and found the object of his search.

He had been rudely thrown on the ground, in a corner, so as to be out of the way, and was left to himself. No one cared for him, or attempted to stanch his wounds. As Marcus caught sight of him in his misery, he uttered a long, low cry. He made his father put him down, and caught the gladiator's hand.

"O father, how he suffers! Will he die? Won't you save him? How cruel to kill him! Save him, my dearest father! Oh, see how he bleeds, and how pale he is! And his poor eyes are closed!"

The gladiator half opened his eyes; and, amid his agony, there was an expression of faint surprise that any one should think of him.

"O father," said Marcus, with eyes filled with tears, "will you take him away? You will, for your little boy. If you love me, father dearest, take him away. See how he suffers!"

The whole manner of his son—his tears, his eager solicitude, and his persistence—was more than Labeo could resist. Besides, though a Roman soldier, and familiar with scenes of blood, there was something in this sight which shocked his sense of justice.

So he at once called some of the guards and ordered them to remove the Briton. His rank enforced obedience; and the men carried the wounded gladiator away to another apartment, where they laid him on some straw.

"Now, send some one here to attend to his wounds," said Labeo.

An attendant soon came, who examined the wound, and dressed it after a rough fashion.

"Father," said Marcus, "you shall not leave him here."

"What? Why, what can I do?"

"You must take him away."

"Away? Where to?"

"Home."

"What could I do with a gladiator, dear boy? I don't want him to fight for me."

"Oh, no—I want him. Give him to me, my dearest father. I want to save his life, and have him for my own."

"Well—you have strange fancies," murmured Labeo, "but I suppose I must do what you say."

"Look—he sees us—he knows that we are his friends," cried Marcus, eagerly.

The gladiator half opened his eyes, and seemed to have some dim perception of the truth. He saw the sweet child-face, with the glory of its expression of love and pity; the eyes beaming with tender interest, and fixed on his. He looked at the face in wonder. It seemed like a new idea. He was bewildered.

Marcus took his hand again.

"Father, dear father, let him be mine. You will—won't you? You will save him and give him to me—won't you—and bring him home with us?"

"Why, not now," said Labeo, hesitatingly.

"Well, when will you?"

"Oh, I must see some people first and ask; and then, dear boy, I will bring him out for you."

"My dearest father, I knew you would. And he shall be treated well," said Marcus, "and recover from this cruel wound."

All this time Marcus had held the gladiator's hand in both his, and the wounded man lay looking at him. By-and-by the expression of bewilderment gave way to one of deep devotion. He seemed to understand what it meant. He discovered that this bright, beautiful being was interceding for his life, and trying to save him from misery. Feebly and with a slow effort he drew the delicate hand of Marcus upward, and held it for a moment against his lips. Then a big tear rolled from each eye and fell down his face.

"O father," said Marcus, "he knows that I am sorry for him. See, he has kissed my hand. When will you take him out of this hideous place?"

"Not to-day," said Labeo; "but I will speak to them, and make them treat him kindly; and then, when he gets a little stronger, I will have him brought out."

This appeared to satisfy Marcus. His father then called the attendant who had dressed the wounds of the Briton, and, putting some money in his hand, gave directions for the care of the wounded man, saying at the same time that he intended to have him removed in a few days, if he recovered. The attendant thought that he might recover, and promised to follow out all Labeo's directions.

After this the father and son took their departure.

"Dear father," said Marcus, as they were leaving, "what makes the people so cruel? They love to see blood. All this breaks my heart. I will never come here again. And I want so much to get that poor man out home. How he suffered! How cruel it was! and when he had been so brave, too! Oh, how I hope he will get well soon. But what makes the people so cruel?"

"Oh, they are not cruel," said Labeo, trying to turn it off. "It is their fashion. They have always been so. You will learn to love it as you grow older."

"Never," said Marcus, with a shudder; and then, after a

pause, he said in low, reproachful tones : “ Do you want me to learn to be so cruel, dearest father ? ”

Labeo looked puzzled. At last he said,—

“ Dear boy, when you get to be a soldier, you will feel differently.”

“ But ought a soldier to be cruel ? You are not a cruel man. You would not hurt a poor horse ; and I never saw you treat a man badly. I will be like you ; and I will never be cruel. I want to be merciful. That is what nurse taught me. She says : ‘ Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.’ ”


“ ‘ Blessed are the merciful,’ ” repeated Labeo. “ That is a wise saying. Yes, dear boy, be as you like. You have a good, noble heart ; and I will not bring you here again until you want to come.”





XIII.

Cineas and Helena.

ARCUS gave his father no rest until he had brought the gladiator out to his villa. The wound was severe, but the strong constitution of the hardy Briton proved superior to the shock, and he rapidly recovered. Marcus attached himself to him, and the gladiator in return seemed to feel for this pure boy a sentiment which amounted to adoration. He could only speak a few broken words of Latin, so Marcus tried to teach it to him.

The Briton said that his name was Galdus, and that he had been a chief of the Trinobantians. Some troubles had arisen about supplies of corn, and a detachment of Roman soldiers had seized some from his people. He resisted, and in the fight that ensued the small detachment was put to flight. Another larger body of men then came, and in the course of affairs Galdus was taken prisoner. His life was spared, and he was sent to Rome. He had been selected for a gladiator, on account of his warlike mien and powerful frame. Such was his story, told in scarce intelligible language, but with a deep passion of hate for the Romans, that was startling to his childish companion. But Marcus sympathized with Galdus with all his soul. Tyranny and oppression of all kinds were shocking to him, and here stood before him a man who told him a story of wrong which he had endured, that filled the boy with vague desires to punish somebody. This sympathy, coming from such a source, added

new strength to the reverence and affection which Galdus felt for him, and made him devote himself incessantly to this sweet child. His rugged, barbaric nature found a strange charm in this youthful grace and delicacy, and Marcus stood before him like a divinity.

The boy reflected with proud complacency on the fact that he had saved this heroic barbarian. He was his patron. Whenever he was not with his father, he was with Galdus. The two might be seen at almost any hour of the day, walking together, Galdus following Marcus wherever he led the way, and often carrying him lovingly in his arms. As time went on, he told Marcus that he had no relatives in Britain. All had been slain in battle, and his father, the last survivor, had died in Camulodunum before he left Britain.

One day all Rome was startled by a terrible tragedy. It was the murder of Pedanius, who lived in the villa adjoining Labeo's, by one of his own slaves. This man had always been noted for his cruelty. The first thing that Cineas had seen when he came to Labeo's house was the horrid spectacle of the crucified slaves at the gate of Pedanius. Of all the Romans, none excelled him in cruelty. This tragedy was caused by an act of gross injustice. A slave of his, who had been saving money for years, so as to purchase his freedom, and had paid the larger part, found his avaricious master unwilling to conclude the bargain. He asked an additional sum, which, with that which had already been paid, would have made an amount larger than was ever demanded before. It would have taken five years more of labour to pay it, and even then there was no certainty that he would get his liberty. The man fell into the deepest dejection, and at length determined on revenge. In the dead of night he stole into the bed-chamber of Pedanius and stabbed him. The body was found in the morning with the dagger yet in the wound.

A thrill of horror was caused throughout the neighbourhood

and in the city. It was not alone the assassination or the consequences of the act ; for the law was, that under such circumstances all the slaves should suffer death without exception. Now, as there were four hundred slaves on the estate, the prospect of such wholesale execution shocked even the Romans. The populace of Rome, filled with compassion for so many innocent men, opposed the execution with such vehemence that it almost amounted to an insurrection. Rome was filled with the fiercest excitement. The question was taken up by the Senate, and many sided with the people ; but most who owned slaves themselves, and perhaps felt little confidence in their good-will, were in favour of upholding the law in all its severity. They declared if the law were repealed there would be no further safety, and that the good of the State demanded the execution of all.

The number doomed to suffer, their age and sex, and the manifest innocence of the most of them, created pity even among the Senate, but the law was allowed to take its course. But the people grew more clamorous than ever in favour of the slaves. They rose in arms, filled the city with tumult, and stopped the execution.

Labeo was one of the party who were in favour of mild measures, and he saw with horror the resolution of the Senate. But he could do nothing. Nero was determined that the law should take its course. He determined to enforce it without mercy. He issued a proclamation, and ordered the streets to be filled with soldiers, and so the people were kept down, and the wretched slaves were all crucified, amid the horror of the whole city. It is a remarkable thing that one of the senators actually wished to have all the freedmen executed too ; but Nero, in one of those milder moods which sometimes came upon him, refused to have it done, and decided that if it was just to maintain the ancient laws in all their severity, it was unjust to exceed their rigour.

This whole transaction threw a deep gloom over Labeo's house. There stood the villa of Pedanius ever in sight, and ever reminding them of this deed of sickening horror. Helena found that she could no longer live there in peace, and implored her husband to go to some other place which should not be polluted by such revolting associations. Marcus, too, was most profoundly shocked. His keen sense of justice made him feel most acutely the horrible cruelty of the execution, and he never walked near the boundaries which separated the two estates. He always kept on the further side of it, and never even looked at the ill-omened place without a shudder. Many things disturbed his gentle nature, and gave him a knowledge of the misery and injustice that are in the world. The sufferings of the gladiators, the wrongs of Galdus and his countrymen, and the fearful indiscriminating vengeance taken on the slaves, harassed his sensitive mind. Again he put his oft reiterated questions, "What makes the Romans so cruel?"—"Is there no mercy at all among them?" For many days there was a seriousness and sadness on his face that was quite new, and a troubled expression that showed some deep anxiety. His delicate organization seemed crushed by the darkest problems of life which were imposed upon it too soon.

At such times he would talk to Galdus, and tell him all his feelings; not because Galdus was dearer to him than any one else, but because he seemed more like an inferior. He could not talk with such freedom on such subjects to his father, or mother, or Cineas. They, he thought, might think it all childish. But Galdus would not. Galdus believed all he said. Galdus looked up to him and revered him. So he told all his feelings to Galdus; and although Galdus did not know the language well enough to understand all, yet he could easily comprehend the grand and simple first truths of right and justice which Marcus uttered. Neither had that sense of right distorted by anything conventional. One was a child, the other a barbarian;

and thus had one common ground, in that they were both near to nature and far from art or artifice.

But the agitation of Marcus was not unnoticed by his parents. They thought that such long and incessant brooding over one terrible theme would injure his health; and this added strength to Helena's desire to move away.

Labeo was not unwilling. He had become a pretty constant attendant at court. Nero showed him marked favour, always called him Hercules, and the common opinion was that he was destined to rise high in position and influence. All this made him quite desirous of having a house in the city; and so, several months afterwards, the whole household came to Rome.

The change of scene had a favourable effect on Marcus. The house was a noble edifice, surrounded by gardens, on the slope of the Esquiline Hill. From its roof there was a commanding prospect of the city. Under the charge of Galdus, Marcus loved to be taken through the streets, along the noisy and crowded Suburra, or into the bustling busy Forum. He still remembered the fearful events which had so discomposed him, but less vividly. Gradually other things came to interest him, and he would talk to his confidant Galdus about the sights of the great capital.

By the time that they moved into Rome, the nurse had recovered completely, and was as well as ever. Her sweet, serene face once more might be seen among the women of the household. The numerous interviews which she had had with her mistress had given rise to a real friendship, in which the nurse's position as slave was lost sight of by Helena. A new bond was also formed between them by Helena's Christian sympathies. The lofty and pure sentiments of the nurse enabled her to present to her mistress in the most attractive form the divine doctrines of that manuscript which she had obtained.

The close sympathy between Cineas and his sister drew them together constantly. He understood her. He sympathized

with her in her feelings. When she spoke of the Christian religion, he seemed eager to know how it had affected her. He said that this stood before them all as something which possessed a wonderful charm, and perhaps at last it would seem to be what they wanted. Yet although he was strangely moved by its doctrines, he found many difficulties.

Helena, in speaking on this theme, found an enthusiasm which she had not shown before ; and they were so much alike that Cineas invariably fell into the same mood, and sometimes even shared in her exultation at finding the truth at last.

"How I rejoice, my dearest," he said, "that you have found what you desired. For my part, I am more critical than you. I look at a question on more sides. Perhaps you are right, but I cannot help my nature ; besides, I have many things which I would say, but I do not wish to disturb that peace of mind which you have gained."

It was not long before Helena let him have the manuscript which she had read with such emotion. He accepted it gladly, and spent many months over it, till the words and doctrines were all familiar.

"I feel that I am half a Christian," said he, once ; "and if I do not become one altogether, at least I will receive from the Book ideas which I can never lose. There are words here which I might call divine, and which seem to convey to me in themselves the result and summing up of whole systems of philosophy.

"I cannot help believing that this wonderful man was a divine messenger sent by God to that people to teach them. They did not expect one like him ; they looked for a very different one, as Isaac has often told me.

"His life excites my wonder and admiration. I have always tried to think in the true philosophic spirit, and have sometimes imagined what might be the philosophic outline of the life of such a Being. I have felt that he would scorn all vulgar dis-

play, and would address himself to the mind alone, not to the senses. I find here that which is more than I had imagined ; the real filling up of my faint outline ; the solid substance of that which with me was a faint shadow.

“I do not know what to think of his miracles ; but if they are true, they are of the kind which they should be. They never appeal to the vulgar approbation ; they are never performed for effect. But they are wrought for the good of man—to heal the sick, or to comfort the sorrowful. This was the true character of Socrates, and the real nature of his life—to go among all classes, and to seek the good of the public. He neglected his own affairs, and gave himself up wholly to the good of his fellow-men. Yet I must say that I find something more pathetic in this Jewish teacher than in our Greek one—more tender, more sympathetic, more divine. Above all, there is something more positive. He speaks, as the Book itself says, like one who has authority. He proclaims what he knows to be the truth. Socrates hints and argues, and rarely makes a direct statement. He adopts a negative style ; but the Jewish teacher is never anything else than positive.

“For this reason, all that he says comes directly to the heart and to the mind. A few words express that which Socrates uses many words even to hint at. He gives also a nobler view of God. He tells us directly that the Supreme One is our Father, and feels positive love for his creatures. There is something that Socrates never says. I take that, my dearest ; I embrace that ; I will cherish it in my secret soul as long as I live ; and if I have learned nothing else from your book, I have at least found this out, and I rejoice in the great doctrine.

“I cannot tell you all the thoughts that have filled my mind since I read that book. All my life seemed to change. All that I had ever read seemed to recur to me ; and the noblest words of my favourite poets seemed to come up and compare themselves with these words, and shrink back, unable to bear

the comparison. Most of all, I thought of the words of the Prometheus. How often have I cited that character as the grandest conception of genius ; but I never thought that I would ever read the life of a real man which carried in itself all that I most admire in the Prometheus, and more also.

“ When I read of that death of agony, I recalled many passages from that poem which seemed to afford a parallel. You know them well, for how often we have read and sung them together. How I felt that I could say to this sufferer, in the sublime words of that chorus,—

“ ‘ I thrill to behold
Thee, victim doomed—
* * *
And all because thou
Didst overflow, for mankind below,
With a free-souled, generous love !’

“ Yes ; there was a repetition of all that Æschylus has presented to us—a Being who loves men, who does good to them, who suffers for them, who endures the mysterious anger of the Supreme. But the Supreme Being of Æschylus is a tyrant, while here the suffering One always speaks of his love.

“ When I see him crushed in the garden, I recall the mourning cry of Prometheus :—

“ ‘ Because I gave
Honours to mortals, I have yoked my soul
To this compelling fate.’

“ But I see in this Jewish teacher a spirit infinitely more divine ; so much so that comparison becomes impossible ; and when the words of Prometheus are suggested, further thought shows that the resemblance is only partial. Yet there is much which one may recall. When the victim is nailed to the cross, his enemies rail on him and sneer at him, and bring to mind the words of Kratos to Prometheus :—

“ ‘ Having spoiled the gods
Of honours, crown withal thy mortal men
Who live a whole day out. Why, how could they
Draw off from thee one single of thy griefs ?’

“ This is the same scorn which I see repeated in the words,
 ‘ He saved others, himself he cannot save.’

“ And so, too, when I see this innocent victim, this holy and
 divine being, in his agony, I utter the words of those who
 gazed on Prometheus :—

“ ‘ I behold thee, Prometheus—yet now—yet now ;
 A terrible cloud, whose rain is tears,
 Sweeps over mine eyes that witness how
 Thy body appears
 Hung a waste on the rock in infrangible chains.’

“ And as they say again :—

“ ‘ I moan thy fate, I moan for thee,
 Prometheus ! From my restless eyes,
 Drop by drop, intermittently
 A trickling stream of tears supplies
 My cheeks all wet from fountains free.’

“ Yes, both suffer from love to man :—

“ ‘ Such is thy woe for thy deep love to man.’

“ But I see the great difference between the teachings of the
 two books, the Grecian poem and the Jewish story. One
 makes the supreme a cruel tyrant, the other a tender and lov-
 ing father ; the former creates fear, the latter awakens love.

“ Most of all, my sister, have I felt the deep tragic nature of
 those events which accompanied the death of this mysterious
 man. The darkening of the heavens, the earthquake, and all
 the other events, which showed that nature itself sympathized.
 So, in Prometheus, nature sympathizes, and all the races of
 mankind join in one universal lamentation :—

“ ‘ All the land is moaning
 With a murmured plaint to-day,
 All the mortal nations
 Having habitations
 Near the holy Asia.

 Now are groaning in the groaning
 Of thy deep-voiced grief.
 Mourn the virgins habitant
 Of the Colchean land,
 Who with white, calm bosoms stand
 In the battle’s roar,—

Mourn the Scythian tribes that haunt
The verge of earth, Mæotis' shore—
And Arabia's battle crown,
And dwellers in the lofty town,
Mount Caucasus sublimely nears—
An iron squadron, thundering down
With the sharp-prowed spears.'

"You know how the 'master' was always accustomed to say that the most divine thing in the attitude of Socrates was when he forgave his enemies. This, too, I always considered in the same way. I took to myself the majestic, the godlike nature of the man, who could rise to such transcendent superiority to human weakness, as to turn to those who even then were burning to take vengeance on them, and tell them to their faces that he forgave them. This you know well, for you, too, have taken part in the same instructions, and have learned to look on this with the eyes of the 'master.' You may imagine, then, how my whole being thrilled as I came to that part of the sufferings of this wonderful man, where he prays to God for forgiveness to his enemies. That is the crowning glory of his sublime life. Under such circumstances of physical anguish, it would not have been surprising if something like vindictiveness had appeared, and if a prayer had been wrung out from him in that great agony which invoked vengeance on his cruel enemies. Yet there was an utter absence of this; there was more—a perpetual presence of that same love for man which had marked his life; and he excused them by saying that they knew not what they were doing."

Such was the confession of Cineas, frankly made to his sister, with deep and strong emotion, and an earnestness which showed that he had been moved to the inmost depths of his being by the study of the book which she had lent him. She said not a word; nor did she venture upon any interruption of any kind. She hoped that he would end it all by declaring that he had found all that he had ever sought. She herself was moved by the evident depth of his feeling, and hoped that

they might be cordially joined in a joyous reception of this new doctrine. And so, as he at length paused, she said,—

“And what do you think this wondrous One may be? Do you think that he can be all that the Christians say he is?”

Cineas was silent for some time.

“I know all that the Christians believe, and I can say this, that I am not yet a Christian. I may never be one. I will tell you, my sister, what my present opinion is, as far as I have formed an opinion.

“I think that this man is another Socrates, formed under different circumstances, and perhaps more favourable ones. From many conversations which I have had with Isaac, I have learned much about the Jews. They were a nation among whom religious thoughts of a most exalted nature were common to all. They were profoundly earnest and serious, with feelings of awful reverence toward the Most High, whom they believed to be always present among them.

“Now, we Athenians have always been lively, witty, and sarcastic, with a strong love for argument and discussion. Our great teacher bore our character. He was fond of discussion; he was lively, fond of banter, quick at retort, and had that indirect way of making assertions, which is a characteristic of the people to which he belonged. He was invincible in discussion, his wit was unequalled, his irony was overpowering. He was a great teacher, but one of the thorough Athenian style.

“But this Jewish teacher came fresh from a solemn, silent people, full of veneration, possessed of sublime ideas of God, and convinced of his love for them. He was a true child of such a people. He was solemn, impressive, earnest, like themselves. He spoke positively as they did. He never hinted at truth, but proclaimed it aloud. In short, he was a Jewish Socrates, if such a term be not contradictory; or he was what Socrates might have been had he been born a Jew.

“There are many things which I cannot understand, espe-

cially his miracles, and the character of them. Socrates plainly stated that he was sent by God, as did the Jewish teacher ; but he never pretended to perform miracles. The only sign of supernatural power which he presented was his ‘attendant spirit’—his dæmon. But, perhaps, among the sceptical Athenians it was better not to have the power of performing miracles. It might have put an end to his career at an early period.

“Such are my present impressions, my dearest ; but I have many difficulties before me. These feelings of mine may change. But you know how cautious I am, what a true Athenian I am, and how I look on every possible side before I receive any new proposition. Believe me, however, what I have read in that book will not soon be forgotten. I feel even now that it exerts a strange influence over me.”

Such was the effect of this book on Cineas. Helena said but little, knowing that an attempt at argument would only confirm him in the views which he might defend ; but rather left him to himself.





XIV.

The Court of Nero.

THE Court of Nero presented to the world an unequalled spectacle of folly and vice. The emperor had always entertained a passionate fondness for everything Greek, whether in art, or literature, or gymnastics. In his self-conceit, he was not content to stand in the attitude of a patron towards these things, but sought to be a competitor in all. He instituted trials of skill in music, wrestling, and horsemanship—called *Neronia*—which were to be performed every five years. Not satisfied with this, he determined to descend into the arena, and win some of those honours which the strains of Pindar once made so glorious. He aspired to the fame of a charioteer, and besides this, he loved to sing his own verses to the accompaniment of the harp. He used to say “that in ancient times this had been the practice of heroes and of kings.” He celebrated the names of illustrious men who had distinguished themselves in this way, and said that Apollo had less glory from his gift of prophecy than from his office as patron of the muses. In his statues the god was thus represented.

Seneca and Burrhus tried to prevent the emperor of the world from debasing himself in the eyes of the people, and at first restrained him partially. A wide space at the foot of the Vatican was enclosed for his use, and there he practised his beloved arts, at first in comparative seclusion. But his love of

fame made him dissatisfied with these contracted bounds ; he invited the people to see him, and their applause, given without stint or measure, served to lead him on to new excesses.

Thereupon he determined to make his own follies excusable by associating others with himself. He found poor descendants of illustrious families, and paid them for their co-operation. He produced these on the public stage. His success made him go still further, and by heavy bribes he induced several Roman knights to perform in the arena.

Then he established a kind of amusement called "*Juvenile Sports*." Men of high rank enrolled themselves in this association, and all classes soon sought membership. Its object was to promote the theatrical art. Women of rank followed the prevailing fashion. One woman, of eighty years of age, named Ælia Catella, forgot herself so far as to dance on the stage. Luxury and corruption reigned supreme here, and the sports served to pamper the worst inclinations.

All these things seemed to impel onward Nero to fresh extravagances. The corruption of the time encouraged him to throw off all restraint. At length he went upon the public stage, in the sight of the people, as a performer. He entered the scene with a harp in his hand, and affected the arts of professional musicians. A circle of his friends was near, tribunes and centurions were at hand, and a prætorian cohort was on guard to protect him. All applauded the master of the world.

In connection with this, Nero instituted a company of Roman knights under the name of *The Augustan Society*, all of whom were young men of profligate tendencies. They seconded Nero in his wildest extravagances, whether of musical performances or horse-racing. The leaders of the society had salaries of forty thousand sesterces each. They became the most eager supporters of their patron, praised all his acts, and offered to him the most extravagant compliments and the grossest of flatteries ; for each one hoped, by this, for personal advancement.

One of Nero's highest desires was to excel in poetry. All who loved the art were invited to join a society for this purpose. The members of this society met on familiar terms of intimacy, and brought their productions to these meetings. Sometimes they brought fragments of poetical composition, and then endeavoured to unite them all into a regular poem, always, however, giving chief prominence to the productions of the emperor.

Thus Nero, amid his cruelties, wasted his time in frivolities as well as vices, and the world followed the example which the ruler set them, only too readily.

All this time Nero had a restraint upon him in the persons of Burrhus and Seneca; but the time now came when these restraints were removed.

Burrhus died suddenly from a disease in his throat. Men whispered to each other that poison had been administered by some one of Nero's emissaries, and that when the emperor visited his dying friend, the latter turned his face away from him.

After his death Tigellinus rose. The situation was given to him, and to another named Rufus, but Tigellinus was the real actor. This man had risen through a long career of unscrupulous vice to be the chief favourite of the emperor. Burrhus always hated him, and kept him under some control, but now there remained no obstacle between him and his desires. The same arts which had made him influential with Nero for so long a time, perpetuated that influence and increased his ascendancy every day.

Seneca felt the effects of the death of his friend. There was no longer any possibility of making headway against the corruptions of the Court, and he soon learned the change which had taken place in his position. Secret enemies began to undermine him. His vast wealth, and the means which he used to increase that wealth, had made his name disliked even among

the virtuous, while his general character made him hateful to the vicious. The creatures of Tigellinus, and the more abandoned courtiers, never ceased to fill the mind of Nero with their slanders, until at length Seneca found it impossible to live at the Court in comfort or safety.

He besought Nero to allow him to go into retirement, enumerated the many favours which he had received, praised the generosity of the emperor, and pleaded his age and infirmities as an excuse for his wishes.

Nero answered him in words which were of the most flattering and complimentary character. He assured Seneca that he owed to him all that he knew, and declared that he had never given back anything like an equivalent return for the benefits which he had received. He refused to let him go, and said that he still needed his wise counsel.

To this Seneca had to yield, and though doubting the sincerity of Nero, he was forced to continue in connection with him. But in order to disarm envy and suspicion, he lived in a most retired manner, avoided display, and appeared abroad but seldom. He preserved his life for a time, but his influence was gone, and Nero now, having lost his last restraint, set no bounds to his cruelty. All who excited his suspicions were removed by death. Among the most eminent of his victims was the noble Plautus, whose death filled the world with terror. Yet so slavish was the public mind, that the Roman senate, when informed of this murder, decreed public vows and supplications to the gods. This action of the senate taught Nero that no possible obstacle lay before him in the accomplishment of any of his desires.

He now determined to carry out an intention which he had cherished for some time, and that was, to get rid of his wife Octavia. The pure life of Octavia was a perpetual reproach to him, and her own character made her hateful to a man like him. Above all, he was desperately in love with Poppæa, and

had determined to make her his wife. False witnesses were easily found who swore foul crimes against Octavia. Her servants were seized and put to the torture, and, though many were constant, yet some, overcome by agony, confessed whatever was asked them. Octavia was condemned and repudiated, and dismissed from the palace, and afterwards banished.

But Octavia was loved and pitied by the people ; murmurs arose, and finally the clamour grew so great that Nero had to recall her from banishment. But Poppæa had vowed her death, and never ceased to exert all her arts upon Nero for this purpose. She did not find the task a difficult one. New plots were formed against the unhappy lady, and finally an infamous wretch was found by whom fresh crimes were laid to her charge, and she was once more banished. There in a few days she received orders to put herself to death. She was young and timid, she had known much sorrow, and at this last calamity her nature faltered in the presence of death. But her supplications were of no avail. She was seized, her veins were opened, and since the blood did not flow fast enough in the chill of her fear, she was taken to a vapour bath and there suffocated.

All Rome was filled with horror, but, nevertheless, the senate ordered thanks to be returned to the gods, even for this, as they had done in other cases.

But the life of the Court knew no change. Still the gaiety and the debauchery went on, and still Nero cherished his tastes for literature, philosophy, and art. Men of genius still frequented the place ; indeed, whatever they felt they did not dare to retire, for fear of alarming the jealous tyrant.

Lucan and Seneca, great names in that age, and great names yet, still resorted to the palace. Among those who were most agreeable to Nero, none surpassed the gay and light-hearted Petronius. He was a man of singular character, who illustrated some of the peculiarities of the age. He slept through the day, and caroused through the night. In his manner at Court he

appeared to be the most indolent of men. He sought advancement by cultivating all known pleasures. He spent money lavishly, yet never went beyond his fortune, and showed the same caution even in his pleasures, for he took care to keep himself from extremes. He was an epicure, but not a glutton; and played the part of a refined and elegant voluptuary. Delightful in conversation, with gay and ready wit, skilled in music and in art, and a writer of acknowledged eminence, he combined in his person those intellectual and moral qualities which could best secure the favour of a man like Nero. He became the arbiter of taste, and gained a great ascendancy over the emperor,—so much so, indeed, that Tigellinus became more jealous of him than any other man, and sought his ruin above all things. Petronius knew his malignity, but cared nothing. He had a supreme indifference to fortune, and cared nothing whether the following day should bring glory or ruin. On account of this magnificent indifference, he was perhaps the only man in all that Court who was really as light-hearted as he seemed.

Meanwhile, the position of Cineas and Labeo was a peculiar one. Both looked upon the crimes of Nero with abhorrence. By Cineas the death of Burrhus had been felt as a severe calamity, and the memory of old friendship made the bereavement a sad one. But his grief for Burrhus was not equal to his sorrow for the wretched Octavia. It sickened his soul to think that these things could be done, and that a servile senate could applaud.

Yet he still visited the Court, and for various reasons Nero received him with undiminished favour. If he had absented himself he would have inevitably aroused the suspicions of the tyrant, and those suspicions would have been heightened by the arts of those who were jealous of him. The only way to quit the Court was to go back to Athens. But this he had no wish to do. He had many reasons for remaining in Rome.

It was not moral cowardice on his part that led him to continue his attendance in Court. When the proper occasion might demand, Cineas could show as much courage as any one. But if he now showed in any way any disapprobation of Nero's proceedings, he could effect nothing. He would simply involve himself in ruin, and naturally enough he did not wish to court danger. In the first place, he considered himself. He had a great purpose in life, and he wished calmly to carry that out. He did not wish to rush headlong into imprisonment, or banishment, or death. He could endure all these if he saw duty compelling him, but his duty here seemed to be to carry out his search after truth. He wished to be a philosopher. But if he himself only had been concerned, he would undoubtedly, in his first fierce indignation, have left the Court and taken the consequences. He loathed the man who sat on the throne of the world, and it was only by an effort that he could preserve his old demeanour when in his presence. He loathed the sycophants who filled the Court, and were ready to commit any crime so as to secure the favour of the emperor. But he had to consider others beside himself. His sister and Labeo and Marcus all were with him, and if he fell into disgrace, they would share it. The hopes and the prospects of Labeo, now so fair, would receive a fatal shock, and the labour of years would be brought to naught. Yet this was not all. A decline in favour, a palpable disgrace, would only be the signal for ruin to them all. Tigellinus stood ready to assail them whenever the chance offered itself. With his crowds of hirelings he could make any charge which he pleased against them, and confirm it by false witnesses. To fall into disfavour with Nero, would be to involve himself and all his friends in one general calamity.

With all these considerations to influence him, Cineas was compelled as long as he remained in Rome to frequent the Court as before. Yet he did it with a burdened mind. The

crime that was enthroned there was too open and too gross. He loathed the society into which he found himself forced to go.

Labeo, on the other hand, knew nothing of the distress of mind which actuated Cineas. His feelings about the crimes of Nero were those of utter abhorrence. But he considered that it was not his business to say a word. His military training had brought him all his life in contact with men who committed the most villanous crimes before his very eyes. These things which Nero had done did not shock him so much as Cineas. Familiarity had hardened him.

His great object in life was advancement. He was ambitious; but it was a noble ambition, mingled with love for his son, and fond thoughts of future honours for him. He laboured, and the motive of that labour was that he might leave a great name and a great estate to Marcus. In the effort to acquire this he would never descend to the meannesses which were so common in his day. His soul was incapable of anything dishonourable. He was glad of the opportunity of being present at Court, and hoped that it might lead to some high and dignified office.

After all, the position of these two was not so painful as might be supposed. This arose from the peculiar character of Nero. In all his debaucheries and excesses he never once asked them to take a part. In fact, he did not even expect it. He looked upon both in a peculiar light.

With Cineas he never conversed, except on such subjects as art, literature, and philosophy. The splendid attainments of the Athenian in all these things charmed him. He would not consider him in any other light. He called him his poet, or his philosopher. He separated the world of his amusements altogether from the world of intellectual pursuits; and had no more idea of asking Cineas to share his pleasures than of asking Seneca. Nero loved to affect the philosophical tone, to quote Plato, to discuss such subjects as the immortality of the

soul, the *summum bonum*, and other great questions which were common among philosophers. He also loved to talk of the science of metres, to unfold his own theories on the subject, and suggest new improvements in the structure of verse. Nero believed most implicitly in himself. He thought that he was a kind of universal patron of letters, and it gave him more pleasure to consider himself in this light, than to regard himself as the master of the world. In these discussions on the immortality of the soul, or on the Greek games, or on the power of varying metres, he never made the remotest allusion, by any chance, to the events of the time. Agrippina and Octavia were forgotten. He lived in the past. The poets, the heroes, or the gods of that past, formed the only subjects which he noticed. In him the *dilettante* spirit reached the most extraordinary development which it has ever gained.

As he regarded Cineas, so did he look on Labeo. But Labeo stood before him in a very different character. The former was his philosopher or poet. The latter was his ideal of the Roman. His taste was gratified by the splendid physical development of Labeo, and none the less, strange though it appear, by his incorruptible integrity, his high-souled virtue, and his lofty moral instincts. Nero called him sometimes "Hercules," but afterwards preferred to name him "Cato." The virtue of Labeo gratified him in precisely the same way in which a well-executed statue did. In both cases it was simply a matter of taste. He had a strong perception of the fitness of things. It would have shocked him if Labeo had in any one instance shown a tendency toward ordinary folly or frailty. It would have marred his ideal. It would have been such excessive bad taste in Labeo, that he could never have forgiven it nor forgotten it. And so, to this strange being, the very excesses which he urged upon others, and practised himself, would have appeared an unpardonable offence if they had been practised either by Cineas or Labeo. To some it would have

been death to refrain ; to these it would have been death to indulge.

Such was Nero.

Now, if Cineas had been truly wise, he would have turned from this Court and its associations, to one who could have told him far more than ever he had learned, either from "The Master," or from Isaac, or any other with whom he had ever been brought into connection.

Paul had been presented to his mind as a man of very remarkable character, and Cineas had frequently felt desirous of an interview with him, yet he had never yet sought one.

There were various reasons for this, among which the strongest was perhaps his Grecian pride. He did not see in its full grandeur the character of the great apostle. He looked upon him as a brave man, and perhaps, in some things, a great man ; but in his heart of hearts he depreciated him as a Jew. He did not wish to learn anything from such a man. If he had been an associate with Seneca, or if he had seen him moving among the great ones of Rome, he might perhaps have sought an interview. As it was, he never made an effort.

Yet Cineas had leanings towards this new religion, of which he had already seen such beautiful and touching manifestations. He desired to learn even more of it. He thought that he had already learned all that the writings of the Christians could teach him, but still felt some desire to see more of the Christians themselves.





XV.

The Centurion.



AFTER they had been in Rome a few weeks, Julius came to see Cineas. In the course of conversation he asked the latter if he felt willing to go to one of the meetings of the Christians.

"They hold their regular meetings," said he, "on the first day of their week. They follow the Jewish fashion of dividing time into portions of seven days each, and they take one day out of the seven for rest from worldly cares, just as the Jews do with their Sabbath. They do no work or business of any kind on that day, but consider it sacred. They meet on the morning of the first day of their week for religious services, and they have chosen that day because they believe that on that day their Divinity, Christ, rose from the dead after he was crucified."

"Have you been to any of these meetings?" asked Cineas.

"Yes; to several. The Christians make this their chief meeting. They have a fashion of eating bread and drinking wine together, because their Master instituted this, and directed them always to do it in remembrance of him. They attach to it a certain solemn and mystic signification, and think that their meeting on that day is holier than any other. But they also have meetings at night, and this night is one which they have appointed for this purpose."

Cineas was glad of the opportunity, and said as much. He wished to see these Christians by themselves, so as to learn

how they worshipped God. He had learned enough of their doctrines to respect them, if he did not believe them. He knew that they contained some of the most sublime truths that he had ever become acquainted with, such as the spirituality of God, his almighty power, his infinite wisdom, and many others, which he used to think belonged only to philosophy. But with these he knew that they had another, greater far than any which philosophy had taught; and that was the sublime doctrine of the personality of this Infinite One—his interest in the affairs of man; his care for his creatures. The Christians believed that he took a direct personal interest in human concerns; that he looked on man with the feelings of a father; that he watched over the life of every one of his creatures;—in one word, that he loved them.

God loves. Sublime doctrine! This at least Cineas had learned from the manuscript which he had read. In spite of all his attempts to make Socrates a parallel with Jesus, he felt that there was a mysterious difference between them. He felt that between the uncertain utterances of the one, surrounded as they were with doubts and limitations and hesitations, and the direct teachings of the other, with all their strange power, and might, and majesty, there was a wide dissimilarity. The one hesitated, the other declared; the former doubted, the latter taught. From the teachings of Jesus he received this one truth, which sank deeply into his mind; a truth which he had often struggled after, often sought to deduce from the writings of Plato, but which often eluded him, and was always hard to determine;—this was the very truth which Jesus taught above all things—the doctrine that God loves. He received this with a strange exultation; he felt that this was true. It was something that satisfied his doubts, removed his perplexities, and dispelled the gloom that often gathered over his mind. God can love, and God does love. This was what he learned from the Christian writings.

And so he gladly accepted the invitation of Julius to accompany him to one of the Christian meetings.

It was late, and, as there was no moon, it was very dark. The two set out unattended, but, as the streets of Rome were unsafe after dark, they both went armed. Each one carried a torch, and, thus equipped, they set out for the place of their destination.

Julius led the way. The streets were narrow and winding. The houses rose up on either side to a great height, sometimes having as many as twelve or fifteen stories. Julius seemed to be perfectly at home in the labyrinth of streets. He walked rapidly on, turned corner after corner, and never hesitated for a moment. Cineas soon became so completely bewildered, that he had no idea of where he was.

Lights gleamed in the windows that were open, and flickered through those that were shut. Often a loud cry from above made them start. At such times a window would open, and a vessel would be discharged into the streets below.

"If my father were here," said Julius, "he would rail at this as one of the fashions of Rome, and swear that no man's life was safe after dark in these streets. But there—listen to that! With what a crack that struck the pavement!"

As he spoke something came crashing down immediately in front of them. It was thrown from the very topmost story of a house, and the noise that it made, and the force with which it fell, made Cineas peculiarly alive to the dangers of the streets after dark. He was glad that he had worn his helmet.

So they went on through the dark streets, starting back as often as a window opened above them, and looking around, so as to guard against the impending calamity. At length lights appeared in the distance, and the noise of men and the tumult of a great crowd.

"We are coming to the Suburra," said Julius.

Along this they went; amid the crowds that frequented this

place most; among booths lighted with lamps and torches; and the surging tide of men, and multitudes that seemed to throng as numerous by night as by day. The innumerable torches carried in the hands of the vast multitude, with their flaming ends held aloft, swaying and tossing in the air, threw a wild fantastic light over the scene, and gave a new sensation to Cineas, to whom the wonders of the Suburra by night now appeared for the first time. At times there would come through the crowd a litter containing some noble, preceded by a long train of clients, and followed by others, all carrying torches, and forcing their way rudely through the crowd, quite careless, if in their rapid progress they pushed down some of the people and trampled them under foot. From them all there arose a wild hubbub and confusion of voices; the followers of the nobles shouting at the crowd, and the crowd shouting back; the venders of different commodities at the booths calling out their wares and inviting passers-by to purchase, and drunken men at times yelling out wild songs. In the distance all these various noises mingled together in one indistinguishable and deafening clamour, while nearer at hand each individual noise rose high above the general din. The wild clamour, the rude elbowing of the mob, the rapid rush of men, the glare of the countless lights, and the lurid hue which they threw upon the scene, all combined to bewilder and confuse Cineas. But Julius was accustomed to all this, and led the way quickly and readily, while Cineas had much difficulty in keeping up with him.

At last they turned off to the right into a side street, and, after trimming their torches, they proceeded onward.

They had not proceeded far before they heard loud outcries; voices of a threatening character mingled with stern words of rebuke, and the shrill cry of a woman's voice.

"Some villains are attacking a helpless woman," said Julius, and at once set off on a run, followed by Cineas. Turning round a corner, they came at once upon the scene of tumult.

A dozen men, all of whom appeared to be drunk, with torches in one hand and swords in the other, surrounded one solitary man, who stood with his back to the wall of a house, while behind him crouched a young girl. The man appeared to be about sixty years of age, and he wore the dress of a Roman centurion. With his drawn sword he tried to keep his assailants at bay. They shouted around him, and rushed at him, but that drawn sword, though wielded by an aged hand, seemed to overawe them and keep them at a respectful distance. And so, shouting and dancing like maniacs, they yelled out hideous curses at the old man. One of them in particular, who seemed to be the leader, was particularly careful to stand off at a safe distance, yet eager to hound on his followers. His voice seemed familiar to Cineas.

"Ho there, old rascal!" he cried. "What beggar's stand do you come from? Whose beans have you been eating? Speak, or take a kicking. You cowards," he roared, speaking to his followers, "why don't you take the old beggar by the throat and throttle him?"

Urged on thus, the villains made a simultaneous rush at the old man. His sword struck one of them to the heart. Another followed. The next instant a half dozen hands seized him. In another moment he would have perished.

But with a loud shout Julius and Cineas rushed upon them. One man, whose sword was uplifted to plunge into the heart of the centurion, fell beneath the sword of Julius. Cineas sent another after him. The rest started back in fright, and, not knowing but that a whole guard of soldiers was assailing them, took to their heels.

The old man raised up the girl and comforted her.

"There, dearest daughter, sweetest Lydia," said he, caressingly, "all danger is over. Rise up. Fear not. Come, stand up and thank these brave deliverers, who have saved us from death and shame."

The young girl rose, trembling still, with downcast eyes, and, after a timid glance at the new comers, she flung herself into her father's arms. The old man pressed her to his heart.

"Noble strangers," said he, "whoever you be, accept a father's thanks. It is not my life that you have saved, but my daughter's honour. May the blessings of the great God be yours !" and again he pressed his daughter in his arms.

"But how did you dare to venture out with this young girl ?" said Julius, looking with admiration upon the fair young creature who hung round her father's neck, still trembling with fright.

"We have often gone out before. This is a quiet street, out of the way of all the villains who infest Rome after dark, and I don't know how they happened to come down this way to-night. For myself I have no fear. I could easily face and fight off these cowards, old though I am. But for her"—the old man paused.

"What could have taken her out ?" asked Julius. "But come, let us leave this. We will go with you. We were going elsewhere, but now we will not leave you, for these same men may attack you again."

"Did you recognize that voice ?" asked Cineas, as they walked along.

"What voice ?"

"The leader's."

"Too well," said the old man. "That voice is as well known in the streets of Rome as in the palace."

"It was then the voice of"—Cineas hesitated.

"Nero," said the old man sternly. "Yes. The master of the world leads bands of cut-throats and murderers after dark through the streets of Rome."

They walked along in silence for some time. At last Julius spoke,—

"You invoked upon me the blessing of a great God," said

he inquiringly, laying emphasis upon a form not used by Romans.

"Yes," said the old man, "I did so; I am a Christian."

Julius half uttered an exclamation of joy. "And I," said he, "and my friend are not Christians, but we wish to know something of them, and I was taking him to one of their meetings."

"And I was taking my daughter to one," said the old man. He stopped and seized the hands of Cineas and Julius, one in each of his. "Oh, young men—my saviours and benefactors—may the great God grant this to you, to know him through Christ Jesus, as I know him."

He then walked onward. "I am a Christian, yet I have shed blood this night. But what else could I do? I would not do it for myself, but could I do otherwise when she was in such danger? No; no."

Julius did not understand such scruples. He declared that he should like to have killed them all—even if the leader himself had fallen. "And you, Roman soldier as you are," said he, "what else can you do but fight, if you are attacked?"

The old man said nothing to this, but continued on and talked about something else. At last they reached a door, and here the old man paused. "You are too late for the meeting," said he, "and my home is of the humblest kind; but if you will come up and rest for a while, I shall consider myself honoured."

Both Julius and Cineas expressed their pleasure, and followed the old man into the house.

The house was a lofty one, like most of the common habitations in Rome. They followed the old man up flight after flight of steps, until at last they reached the very topmost story. Here they entered a small room, and this was the home of their new acquaintance. In this room there was a couch, a closet on the top of which were a few small vases, a chest, and some seats. Another room adjoined this, which belonged to his

daughter. The young men sat down, and the maiden brought a lamp, and after putting out their torches, the dull glimmer of the single lamp alone illumined the apartment.

The old man told them that his name was Eubulus, and that of his daughter Lydia. Julius and Cineas had now more leisure to regard the appearance of their new acquaintances. Eubulus was a man of venerable aspect, with crisp gray hair, and beard cut close, with strongly marked features, that would have been hard and stern, if it had not been for a certain sweetness and gentleness of expression mingled a kind of sadness that predominated there. His speech was somewhat abrupt, not from rudeness, but rather from a kind of pre-occupation of mind. His daughter had no resemblance whatever to him. A sweet and gentle face, with large, dark, luminous eyes, such as are peculiar to the south, with heavy masses of dark and thick clustering hair, and rich olive complexion; a face that showed much womanly purity and tenderness, with the most delicate sensitiveness; and in the depths of those dark eyes of hers there lay a power of love and devotion which could be capable, if aroused, of daring all things and enduring all things. Yet she was a shrinking and timid girl now, not yet recovered from her fright, grateful to her preservers, yet almost afraid to look at them; gently obeying her father's wishes, doing his bidding quickly yet quietly, and then retreating like a timid fawn into her own room. Julius followed her with his eyes, and looked into that dark room where she had retreated, as though by his gaze he would draw her back.

"I have shed blood this night," said the centurion, after a pause; "but I call God to witness that it was not for myself; no, sooner would I die a thousand times. I shed blood to save my child—my pure and spotless one. No! no! I cannot have sinned in that. Could I give up my darling to these fiends?"

"Sinned?" cried Julius, in deep amazement. "That blow

that you struck for her was the holiest and noblest act of your life, and I, for my part, thank God that I have lived, if only for this, that I might strike a blow in the same cause. The work that I have done this night is that which I shall ever remember with joy. Could you repent when you recall that sweet girl as she crouched in terror behind you? Can you dare to wish that you had flung down your sword and given her up? Away!"

Julius rose to his feet, trembling with indignation. Eubulus caught his hand in both of his own, and pressed it to his heart.

"Noble friend! Your words give me peace. You cannot know what horror the thought of shedding blood can cause the Christian. But you speak peace to my conscience. No—for that sweet child I would slay a score of enemies."

"And I—a thousand!" burst forth Julius, impetuously.

Eubulus said nothing, but his eyes lighted up with pleasure as he looked at the young man who stood before him in his generous enthusiasm.

"I am astonished at what you have said!" exclaimed Cineas, in unfeigned surprise. "The enemies of the Christians charge them with cowardice and baseness; and what greater baseness could there be than this, that a father should quietly and without resistance give up his own daughter to a band of ruffians? A religion which teaches this cannot come from God."

"Say no more," said Eubulus; "I am ashamed of my own feelings. He will forgive what I have done."

"Forgive!" cried Cineas. "Is that the word?—forgive! He will approve of it. He will give you his praise. O my friend, do not abuse that religion of yours, which has in it so much that is great and pure, or else you will make it inferior to philosophy, and you will turn away from it one earnest soul that seeks, above all things, for the truth. I am that one; but if in you, a Christian, I find such sentiments as these, what can I think? Will I not be forced to think that it is all baseness, and poverty of spirit, and abject meanness?"

"No, no," said Eubulus. "If you are an inquirer, you must not judge by me or any other man. For all men are weak and frail. We are full of sin and iniquity. Judge from the words of the Holy One himself, and from these only; not from the sinful lives of his sinful followers, and least of all from me; for I am the weakest of his servants. I strive to do his will, but I cannot. My life is passed in struggles after a better nature; but, woe is me! my struggles seem to be all in vain. And therefore my conscience is tender, and I suspect sin in every action, and I feel that all which I do is sinful; but he is my hope. He has been the hope of my life. He will not desert me. I trust in him."

Eubulus covered his face with his hands.

The two friends remained for some time longer, and at length took their departure. They walked home in silence, each filled with his own thoughts—Cineas wondering at this new manifestation of tenderness of conscience and susceptibility to remorse, or at least to repentance; Julius thinking of nothing but that bright vision which had dazzled him, and thrown a glorious radiance over the humble abode of the centurion.





XVI.

A Christian Meeting.

THE events of this night gave Cineas a strong desire to see more of the Christians. He waited with some impatience for that day which they esteemed so sacred, that he might go with Julius to their meeting, and see and learn what it was that animated their hearts, and gave holy motives to all their lives. He began to understand the power which their religion exerted over these men, which made them so watchful over every action, so sensitive to faults, so quick to repentance. He wondered at this new manifestation of human feeling, and thought that if he himself were thus to weigh every thought and examine every action, he might find much to condemn, and many things of which he might not approve. Philosophy had never shown this. He had never learned thus to look in upon his heart and test all its impulses, and examine all its emotions. The internal struggles which he had experienced had all referred to that effort which he made to separate himself from the attraction of material things. He had sought to live an intellectual life, to regard the world from a philosophical height, and despise its grosser cares; but now he began to discover, in a dim and uncertain way, a mightier task—the effort to make all thought and feeling absolutely pure and holy. The discovery at first filled him with a kind of dismay, for he felt that this absolute purity of motive must be unattainable; yet he saw that the

ceaseless effort after this must of itself be noble, and have an ennobling effect on all the thought and all the life of man.

All these things only intensified his desire to learn more of the Christians.

In a few days they set off once more. Julius had been there before, and knew the place. It was an upper room in a large house that overlooked the Tiber. The ceremony of breaking bread had already taken place, and the two friends found themselves in the midst of an assembly that awaited further services.

It was a large room, capable of holding about a hundred, and it was filled with men, women, and children. Cineas looked around with something of surprise upon the bare walls, the plain unadorned apartment. The absence of anything like statues or pictures satisfied his philosophical soul; for, when the spirit offers worship to the great Supreme, material forms are not needed. This was what he thought. A plain table stood at the upper end of the room, and behind this there were seated several men of striking appearance, one of whom took the lead in the simple worship. He was not known to Cineas, but the people seemed to know him and to love him well, for they regarded him with affectionate interest, and listened with the most profound attention to every word that fell from his lips.

They began by singing a hymn, which to the educated and refined ears of Cineas seemed rude indeed, and barbarous in metre. The people present belonged to the lower orders, however, and the verses were adapted to their comprehension. These Christians knew little or nothing of the refinements of the great national poets. They understood nothing of their rules. They had their own vulgar songs, and their Christian hymns were formed in accordance with rules not known to ears polite. They had been accustomed to vulgar rhythms, where the quantitative metres of the literary classes were unknown,

and the assonance of words was loved. Cineas listened to their songs, and thought of the verses of Nero. For Nero had only tried to elevate the popular forms, and make rhyme prevail among the acknowledged literary productions. These Christians sang the metres and the rhymes which they understood and appreciated, and in their hymns they expressed the divine sentiments of their religion, with all its hope, and purity, and devotion, and exaltation. The hymn which they sang had a chorus which terminated each stanza, and which Cineas could not but remember:—

*“Jesu, tibi sit gloria
In sempiterna sæcula.”*

After they had sung this, the leader took a scroll and began to read.

It was a lofty assertion of the highest and truest morality, in words with which Cineas had already become familiar, which had afforded him material for profound reflection, and had fixed themselves in his memory.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are they that mourn ; for they shall be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek ; for they shall inherit the earth.

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness ; for they shall be filled.

“Blessed are the merciful ; for they shall obtain mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart ; for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peace-makers ; for they shall be called the children of God.

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name’s sake.”

These words, and such as these, and many more like them, did the leader read to the congregation, and all present seemed to hang with breathless suspense on these words of life. They were the very words of their Lord. He had spoken them, and these followers of his listened to them, familiar though they were, as they would have listened to a voice from heaven.

The deep meaning of these words which Cineas had already

felt, seemed to grow deeper as he listened to them now, under these new circumstances. He could not help comparing this meeting with the School of Philosophy which he had attended in his youth. He felt that here there was something more divine. Very different were these words from the words of Socrates.

Then the leader stretched forth his hands, raised his head, and began a solemn prayer to the Infinite God. He confessed many sins and iniquities. He implored forgiveness for the sake of the One who had died for them. He prayed for assistance from the Eternal Spirit, that they all might walk in obedience to his will, and live in holiness.

All this was new to Cineas. Not yet did he understand this, or feel that he could take part in it. He was conscious of no guilt. No sin lay heavy on his heart. But he was disturbed. If these blameless men could thus feel imperfections and human frailties to be sin, why should not he; for he in his morals was no better than they? A new standard of action and of thought seemed to arise before him, and the old self-complacency which he had so long cherished began to fade away at the sound of this prayer. He began to understand that there could be such a thing as love for God, and life-long service, and heartfelt devotion, and all-absorbing zeal—to all of which he was yet a stranger. There was a knowledge of God very different from that which he possessed, and a love of God very far removed from that vague sentiment which he had cherished. All these things forced themselves upon his mind.

But at last the simple service ended, and the little congregation departed, and Cineas walked away with Julius, agitated by many new thoughts.





XVII.

The End of Prophecy.

IF Cineas had sought an interview with Paul, it might perhaps have produced some change in his feelings. As it was, he remained unchanged. The manuscript had deeply impressed him, but he remained unconvinced. His keen, subtle, and speculative mind led him to scrutinize everything carefully, and ask—why?

Helena did not try to convince him, for she knew the attempt would be useless. She contented herself with talking of the happiness which she found in her belief. It had removed her old fears, and given a charm to the future. Now, at last, she knew how to pray, and how to praise. Unconsciously, while refraining from argument, she was exhibiting to her brother something that was more efficacious than all arguments,—the sight of one who actually felt love for God. For as Cineas looked at her, and thought of the change that had taken place in her heart, and compared her present peace with her former despondency, he felt that she had gained something which he did not possess. She had, in fact, gained that very thing for which he sought—firm faith, sure faith, absolute knowledge of God and love for him. And he wished that he could be like her.

Yet the intellectual belief of a philosopher could not readily obey the mere wish of the heart, and so Cineas desired to draw near to Christ, but evermore his reason interposed, and raised obstacles, and pushed him back.

He found an unfading charm in the manuscript of the Christians, and as he read it he owned to himself at last, that there was more in this little volume than he had found in all the works of Plato. It was direct. It spoke to the heart. He found himself gradually thinking the thoughts that arose out of this book, and appropriating the phraseology. He talked with Helena about the Kingdom of Heaven; about God the Father of all, and about Holiness.

Of that holiness there entered into his mind a pure and perfect ideal, more elevated and more divine than all the conceptions of philosophy, and he found that his ideal assumed the form of that mysterious Being of whom this book spoke. Socrates, with his irony, departed from his mind, and in his place there came Christ, with his love and his tears. He began to see in him, that for which all the good and wise among the philosophers had sought so long, and the search for which they had transmitted down through so many ages—the perfect Good, and perfect Fair. All this seemed to him to live in Christ.

But, after all, he was not yet so near the actual adoption of the Christian faith as might be supposed. All these thoughts were intellectual. His taste was affected. Christianity appeared in an æsthetic light. His heart was moved by the sorrows of the great Sufferer, but it was not at all moved by any emotion of repentance or contrition. He had no belief in his own sin. The self-complacency which he had always felt still remained. Why should he repent? What had he to repent of? What confession could he make? He could pray to God for enlightenment, but not for pardon.

One thing he did believe most firmly, and that was that if the sacred writings of the Jews had any lofty meaning, then all that meaning must be sought for in Christ. To accept Christ as the result of the Jewish scriptures, was to him almost to make those scriptures divine. Besides such an interpretation

as this, the theories of Isaac were puerile and vulgar. In a spiritual interpretation he saw the truest and the sublimest philosophy.

He hinted this once to Isaac.

“Cannot your Messiah,” he asked, “of whom you speak so much, be, after all, as I have suggested before, a holy Prophet—a Teacher—one who will try to make your people purer in heart and better in life? This, I think, would be an act more worthy of God than to send a king or a general who would only shed the blood of men.”

“Never,” cried Isaac, vehemently, and with all the fervid passion which invariably showed itself when such a thing was hinted at. “Never. No, no, a thousand times no. The promises of God are true and righteous, and they will be fulfilled. They are literal, or they are nothing. He will not thus mock those who for ages have put their trust in him. He has promised us this thing, as we understand it, in the most direct and unmistakable language; for ages we have waited, and believed, and hoped. Prophet after prophet has come, and each succeeding one has spoken in the same language, and confirmed our hope for the DELIVERER. As he is faithful and true, so will he not deceive his own people.

“He has promised before, many and many a time, both for good and evil, and every promise has been fulfilled. He promised to our fathers, when they were slaves in the land of Egypt, that he would lead them to a fair and fertile land; and he did so. They wandered for years, amid suffering and calamity, but, nevertheless, they reached the Promised Land at last. He promised victory over many enemies at different times; and the victory always came. He threatened division of the kingdom; and the kingdom was divided. He threatened subjugation by an enemy, and long captivity; and the subjugation and the captivity came. He promised deliverance from this captivity; and the deliverance came.

“All these were unmistakable promises, not intended to refer to some dark, spiritual fulfilment, but to a direct literal one, and that direct literal fulfilment every one of them met with.

“And now, when I look at the great promise that stands supreme among all promises, through all ages, coming down from our first father, Abraham, what is that I see? Can I see anything else than this, that if anything be literal, this must be so more than any other? Will he who led his people on through such sorrows, and so afflicted them, thus trifle with them, and show that thus through all their history he has amused them with an empty shadow—a vain hope—an idle tale? What to us, in our slavery, is a mere prophet worth? We have had prophets. We want no more. We want him of whom all the prophets spake; to whom they pointed, and whom they promised. We want him to come and sit upon the throne of David in Jerusalem, not to teach, but to reign. We are weary with waiting, and praying, and hoping, and longing. We are weary and broken-hearted. Oh, thou long-expected One! come quickly. Take thy throne. Reign till all enemies are put under thy feet.

“But why do I fear? I tell you,” cried Isaac, with startling emphasis, “that he will come, and begin his reign. The time is at hand. All things denote his approach. You yourself will live to see him, and that very soon.”

Cineas expressed his surprise at this, and asked Isaac to explain.

“In our prophecies,” said Isaac, “the great One is not only promised, but the time of his coming is also told. For ages our priests have calculated the time of that appearance, and naturally enough, they at first made it come at an earlier period than was said. Each generation loved to think that the prophecy was to be fulfilled in its own day. For the last thirty or forty years the people have expected his appearance every day. False Messiahs have appeared, basing their pretensions on this prophecy, and sometimes they have gained many followers. But they were all wrong. In their fond expectation they put a

forced construction on the words of our sacred writings. This is the reason why they have been so often disappointed.

"But now the time is at hand in literal truth. The mistake which our fathers made need not be made now. We have the record of the holy prophets, and the plain statement of the time of his appearance, from which any one who can calculate may see for himself that this is the hour. These calculations I have made over and over, jealous of error, jealous of my own wishes, lest they should lead me astray, and I have come to this conclusion, that this is the very latest possible period at which he can arrive. He must come now, or never. If he does not come now within five, or perhaps ten years, then he will never come, or the prophecy will be all wrong, all deceit, all mockery of the worst and most cruel kind. But as God cannot deceive, so must this word of his be all fulfilled."

Cineas listened quietly. He had no curiosity to examine the calculations of Isaac, for he was more than ever convinced that it was all a mistake. He had no sympathy with the narrow prejudice of the Jew, and could only wonder at the death-like tenacity with which Isaac clung to his idea.

"All the land feels the power of his presence," continued Isaac. "The people know that he is near. They rise to meet him; they are sure that he will come. A mighty movement is beginning, and all the land trembles beneath the deep hum of preparation."

"How are they preparing?" asked Cineas.

"With arms, and for war," cried Isaac, fiercely. "For they are slaves, and they feel that if they would meet the Deliverer in a fitting manner, they must be free, and must themselves strike the first blow. And any one who has lived in Judea knows this, that of all men the Jews are those who will dare the most, and achieve the most. War must come. It is inevitable. The oppression of the Romans has become unendurable. If the Jews were a more patient race, even then they might have cause

to rise for mere revenge. But they are of all men least patient, and they mean to rise, not for revenge, but for freedom ; and for whatever else that freedom may lead to. They are filled with the same desire, and move to the same impulse, and there is not a man—a man, do I say ?—there is not a woman, there is not a child, who is not ready to face all things, and undergo death itself. Whence comes this feeling, this passion, so universal, so desperate ? It is not all human or national, it rises in obedience to a deeper impulse than mere patriotism. It is divine. It comes from above. It is sent by God. It is his time. It is the hour long hoped for, but long delayed, expected through the ages, waited for with prayer and tears, and now it comes, and he makes his presence felt, and he is there in that holy land, breathing his power into the hearts of the people, that so he may arouse them, and inspire them with a holy purpose, and a desperate resolve, before which all mere human feelings shall be weak and futile. He will first make the people worthy of their high mission, and then he will send the Messiah.”

“ You speak of God causing all this excitement of feeling,” said Cineas, “ of which I have heard. What do you think the Supreme One may design in all this ”—

“ First our freedom,” said Isaac, interrupting him ; “ that first of all. I believe that it is his will that the people whom he has so often delivered before, shall be delivered yet again.”

“ Do you understand fully against what power they will have to fight ?” asked Cineas. “ You are not a Jewish peasant. You have travelled over all the world. You have lived in Rome. You know as well as I do the power of Rome. Can you conceive it possible that one of the smallest of the provinces can shake off the mighty yoke of Cæsar, or that your people can wage a successful war against the world ?”

“ With God all things are possible,” said Isaac.

“ Yes ; but in the course of human affairs, have you not

usually noticed this fact, that the weaker people must be conquered by an overwhelming force, no matter how just their cause?"

"No," said Isaac, drily. "The Greeks did not think so when Persia sent her innumerable hosts against them."

"True," said Cineas; "but the Persians were inferior to the Greeks. Those same Greeks afterwards marched all through Asia, and found out their weakness. The Romans are different. They conquered Greece, and thought it a very easy matter. Is there a people on earth who can withstand the legions of Cæsar?"

"Yes," said Isaac; "that people who have God on their side can overcome even the legions of Cæsar. In our past history we have done things as great as this. That history is full of such victories against overwhelming odds. The nation grew and developed itself in the midst of powerful enemies. The Jews have more than once fought successfully against monarchs who were masters of the world. They have lived, and they have seen, in the course of ages, the rise and fall of many empires. They have seen the rise of Rome; they will see its fall."

"Its fall!"

"Why not? Is Rome beyond the reach of reverse? Are the Romans gods, that they should be for ever free from adversity? They have lived their life, and have done their work. Their time is over."

"When a Roman army enters Judea, I fear you will find that her strength is as great as ever."

"I can understand the unbelief of a Greek," said Isaac. "In your history all is human. Ours is divine. All our history is the work of God. We have lived through a succession of miracles. He chose us out from among all nations. He has been our God when all the gods of the nations were idols. He has saved us from all enemies, and he will save us again."

"But," he continued, "even from your own point of view, a rebellion is not as desperate a thing as you suppose. Do you know the nature of the country? It is filled with mountains and dangerous passes, and commanding positions, each one of which may be made a Thermopylæ. The principal towns are situated in places which give them inconceivable strength, so that if they are well supplied with provisions, they can hold out against attack for an indefinite period. Above all, Jerusalem is most strongly situated. If the people have provisions enough, they can withstand a siege for ever. Mountains are all around. Its walls rise over high precipices. It is distant from the coast."

"But if the people have not provisions enough, what then?"

"No siege could last long enough to bring on a famine," said Isaac confidently. "The defenders of the city would keep the besiegers in a constant state of alarm. The tremendous sweep of the Jewish battle-charge would drive them off. Besides, while the Jews might suffer, the enemy would suffer none the less. All the country would be filled with a hostile and fierce population. Supplies of provisions could not be maintained. They would be cut off in their way. If the besieging army had ample supplies always at hand, even then it could not take Jerusalem; but with my knowledge of the country and its inhabitants, I consider that no army could be fed before Jerusalem, if the people are unanimous in their determination to make war. If Jerusalem starves, the besieging army must starve also, and at such a game it is easy to see which side would give up first. The Jews could die of famine, gladly if it were necessary; but the besieging army could not be supported in such a dire extremity."

"But before famine could come to that besieging army," said Cineas, "the Roman engines would have some work to do."

"Ay, and hard work, too. For all the Roman engines the Jews could find fire, and few would get up to the walls. What

then? I believe the chief fighting would be outside the walls, and the fate of the city decided without the intervention of battering-rams. But why talk of these things? They are all nothing. The Jews have that to rely on of which the world knows nothing. For ages they have looked up to God. The smallest child reverences the spiritual Being. He knows nothing of idols. The poorest peasant prays to his unseen Creator. He believes in him. He trusts in him. That One in whom they all so believe and trust, is worthy of this confidence, and will show himself so. I cannot reason about the probabilities of the conflict, and shut my eyes to him. With him the decision will rest. And can I believe that he will decide against his own?"

"But suppose the Jews do get their freedom, what then? Is there a wider dominion in these hopes?"

"There is," said Isaac, calmly.

"What?"

"The world."

"You believe that the end of all the acts of God is to make Jerusalem the capital of the world?"

"Most devoutly; most devoutly," ejaculated Isaac; "I have told you this before, and I now affirm my belief with fresh emphasis."

"It is worthy of him," said Isaac, after a pause; "most worthy of him. The Jews, his chosen people, alone have the knowledge of him. All the rest of mankind know him not. Is it not worthy of him that he should design to make himself known over all the world as he is now among the Jews? Would not the world be blessed indeed if it worshipped the one Supreme God? Now, all the world is idolatrous. The conquest of the world by the Jews is something more than a succession of common victories, and means something greater than a common empire, with taxes and tribute. It means the extension of the knowledge of God, so that all mankind may learn

that he is their father, and love him, and worship him as such. For this he calls on us to rise. For this he is about to send us our great Leader, before whom all the armies of Rome will be broken in pieces, and all the nations of the earth bow the knee. This is worthy of God."

"But at what a cost!" said Cineas. "Blood, and fire, and devastation, and plundered cities, and blazing villages. What kind of a Being is this who thus seeks to make man worship him?"

"The world may suffer," said Isaac; "but what then? It will suffer that it may be blessed. One generation shall endure misery that all the future may receive true happiness. One march, and one conquest, and all is over. He shall reign whose right it is to reign. He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the rivers unto the ends of the earth!"

Cineas said nothing. He saw how Isaac had moulded his whole soul to this one thought, and as it was repulsive, beyond all others, to himself, he chose to drop the subject.

But after that conversation he looked with new interest towards the land of Judea, anxious to hear the news that came from that quarter, and to see if rebellion were really so imminent as Isaac said.





XVIII.

The Briton.

CINEAS had advanced thus far, that he could recognize the wondrous sweetness and beauty of Christianity. He was surrounded by those who offered to him its fairest manifestations. The venerable nurse, who had now regained all her former calm ; and Helena, who no longer had any spiritual doubts or fears ; and Marcus, whose whole life had been passed amidst the purest influences ;—all showed him how blessed a thing that religion was, which taught man to look up to his Maker, not with fear or doubt, but with affection and confidence. He saw, also, that Julius was about to join them. Something had strengthened those tendencies toward Christianity which he had for a long time manifested ; his attendance at their meetings was constant ; his manner had changed ; and some deep and solemn purpose lay in his soul. All these things, which he saw every day, appealed to his feelings, and he was compelled to reason down those feelings, and guard against them, lest they should carry him away beyond his positive belief.

Nothing had a stronger effect upon him than the words of Marcus. He used to listen in wonder to that slender, spiritual boy as he talked of God his Father, and of heaven ; things unknown to all boys whom Cineas had ever seen, but familiar to the mind of this singular being, who indeed, sometimes, when talking of these things, had such a radiant face, and such a glory

around his brows, that he seemed himself to have known something of the world of which he loved to speak.

He still maintained his friendship for the Briton with undiminished ardour, and still at almost any hour of the day these two strange friends might be seen together, in the portico, or in the garden, sometimes hand in hand, while at other times Galdus carried him on his broad shoulders.

Marcus loved to talk to Galdus of that which occupied so much of his thought. He talked with him about everything, and of this not the least. The Briton attached but a very indistinct meaning to what he heard, but he always listened attentively and admiringly. To such conversations Cineas was not unfrequently a listener, and it made him wonder still more to see a child talking about spiritual subjects to a barbarian. About such things philosophers might speculate, but here the Supreme Being had made his great presence felt in the heart of a child. About that Being the Briton had but dim and indistinct ideas. He always thought of him somehow in connection with Marcus, as though this angelic boy were of some heavenly nature, and therefore nearer to the Divine. For when Marcus tried to tell what the Great One was, the Briton could find nothing that realized the description in his mind so well as the boy himself.

To such a conversation Cineas listened one day, when he stood on the portico, and the boy and his companion were seated on the grass before a broad pool, from the midst of which a wide jet of water burst upward into the air, and fell in clouds of spray back again into the basin.

"Only see," said Marcus, "that golden, glittering spray! and behind it there is a rainbow, and the water in the basin looks like silver. When we get to heaven, I suppose all will be golden like this, only brighter."

"It ought to be all golden and bright where you go," said Galdus, admiringly; "and even then it will not be good enough for you. But that world is for you, not for me."

"Not for you? Why not? Yes it is, for you as well as for me. I want you there"—

"No, no; I'm a barbarian,—you are like a god."

"A god! I am only a child, but I hope to go there, for children are loved and welcomed there; and don't you wish to go there?"

"I wish it, but I must go elsewhere."

"Elsewhere!"

"Yes, to live again as a warrior, or perhaps as an animal. Who knows? I don't."

"To live again! Yes; but not here, not as a warrior. No; you too shall be an angel, in that golden world, if you only wish to, and try to. Don't you wish to?"

"I wish to be with you," said Galdus, lovingly, taking the thin white hand of Marcus in both of his, and looking at him with adoring fondness.

"Don't you love God?"

"You are my God."

"O Galdus! Don't dare to say that. Only one is God. Don't you love him?"

"I know nothing about him. I fear him."

"Fear him!"

"Yes; all that I ever heard about one God, or many gods, makes me fear one and all. They are all fierce and terrible. Let me keep away from them all, and be near you."

"You do not know him then," said Marcus, in mournful accents.

"Those who know him best, fear him most."

"Who?"

"The Druids. They are our priests. They are the only ones who tell us of him."

"They don't know him," said Marcus, positively.

"Why not? They are wise, venerable men, with gray hair

and long white beards. They live in groves, and sometimes see him, and he tells them what he wants."

"And if he does, do you not know how good he is?"

"Good! he is terrible."

"Terrible! how?"

"He thirsts for blood. Nothing but blood. I have seen my own brother laid on a stone, and the priest plunge his sharp knife in his throat."

Marcus shuddered, and looking earnestly at the Briton, asked,—

"Why, what do these murderers do that for?"

"Because he wants blood. I have seen worse than this. I have seen a great cage filled with men, women, and children, and these priests kindled fires around it and burned them all up."

Marcus moaned, and hid his face against the breast of the Briton.

"Oh, horror!" he cried at last, "what do they mean by this? What do they think? Do they think they know him? What do they think he is? It is not God that they worship. It is the devil. He tells them lies. He is the one that wants blood."

"Whoever it is," said Galdus, quietly, "that is what they do, and that is why I fear him, and think him terrible."

"But this is all wrong," said Marcus, passionately. "They do not know him. He loves us. He hates blood. These dreadful things are dreadful to him."

"Loves us?" repeated Galdus, slowly.

"Yes."

"I don't understand. He sends thunder and lightning, and storms and tempests. How can he love us? When I hear the thunder I fear him most."

"And I," said Marcus, "have no fear, for I know how good he is. Why should I fear the thunder? He gives us food and

light, and the sweet flowers, and the bright sunshine. That shows what care he takes of us."

"I didn't think of that," said Galdus, slowly.

"And then, you know, he has been here. He wished to take us all to heaven, and so he came and lived among us—and died. Haven't I often told you this?"

"Yes; but I don't understand it," said Galdus, with a bewildered air. "You are different from me. I learned to fear him, and now, when you tell me such things as these, I think they were done for you and not for me."

"For all," said Marcus, in a sweet, low voice. "He went about all the time among poor people, and sick people, and little children, and spoke kind words; and when he saw any one suffering, he at once went there and comforted him."

"As you did to me," said Galdus, with glistening eyes and tremulous voice, "in that place where I lay struck down by a coward, and all men left me to myself, where they had thrown me, as if I were a dog; and you came with your fair face, and I looked up and thought I saw a vision. For you stood with tears in your eyes; and then I first heard your dear sweet voice, and you spoke pityingly, as a mother might speak, and I was astonished; but I worshipped you in my heart. When you talk to me of your God, and tell me how he came to the poor and the suffering, then I think of you as you came there, and I see nothing but you. I know not your God. I know mine. You are my God, and I worship you."

And the rude, strong Briton pressed Marcus in his arms, strongly yet tenderly; and the boy felt the beating of the stout heart in that giant frame, which now was shaken with emotion, and he knew how strong a hold he had on the affection of that fierce and rugged nature.

"You love me, dear Galdus, and I know it well, but don't say that I am your God. I love you, but there is one that loves you better."

"No, no—that is impossible. I know how you love me. And you have made me forget my country."

"He loves you," said Marcus, with childish persistency. "He will give you a better country."

"I cannot think of him. You are the only one that I can think of, when you talk of love, and piety, and such things."

"Oh, if you only knew him, and could think of him as I do," said Marcus, "then you would love him, and you would know that anything that I have done is nothing to all that he has done! If I came to you when you were so wounded and suffering, be sure that it was because he sent me there to you. He was there, but you did not see him. He has done far more than this, too; he has died for you, to make you love him, and bring you to heaven at last."

"That is the way you always talk," said Galdus, "but I cannot see how it is. I don't understand it."

So they spake, and still, as Marcus told his childish faith, Galdus could only say that he did not understand. To all this Cineas listened, and marvelled much, and wondered where the boy had obtained that deep conviction which he expressed, speaking of it always as he would speak of some self-evident truth, something which he had always known, and supposed all other men knew as well as he.





XIX.

At Court.

THE fortunes of Labeo had been advancing in the meanwhile. Some time before, Nero had given him a tribuneship—an office once powerful, but now with very little authority. However, it was a step onward in that path in which Labeo wished to advance, and the manner in which it was given was a mark of great and unusual distinction, for he was not required to hold the office of quæstor, which generally preceded it. During the year of his tribuneship, he acted with great moderation and reserve, understanding well the character of the times, and knowing that in Nero's reign the want of exertion was the truest distinction. After this was over, he was made prætor, and conducted himself with the same judgment and silent dignity. He had no occasion, as it fortunately happened, to sit in judgment, for that branch of the magistrate's business did not fall to his share. The prefect of the city had charge of the public offences, and nothing remained for him but the exhibition of public spectacles and the amusement of the populace. He conducted these at once with magnificence and economy, so that while there was no profuse expenditure, he yet was secure of popularity.

He found himself as welcome as ever at Court, and Nero still with extraordinary constancy jested at his "Cato." Had it been the affections of the emperor that were concerned, or the public interest, or the wishes of the people, his favour to Labeo

would soon have ceased ; but this was a matter of mere taste, and it was chiefly an idea of the ancient republican character of the office of tribune which induced him to give it to Labeo in such a way.

Labeo, however, without caring particularly for the cause, rejoiced in his advancement, and looked forward hopefully to a prosperous career. The excesses of Nero, which rather increased than diminished, troubled him very little, and did not interfere in the slightest degree with the gratitude which he really felt toward the emperor.

Tigellinus had at first shown himself quite indifferent to the progress of Labeo and the position of Cineas. He had so much confidence in his own power to influence Nero, by working on his baser passions, that he never thought it possible that any other things could have any influence over him. With much astonishment he saw the ascendancy which Cineas had gradually gained at Court, where he stood as one of the prominent men, and yet with not a stain on his character—too rich to wish office, and too content, or perhaps too proud, to seek for honours. Tigellinus had expected for a long time that his master would grow weary of both these men ; but when he found that Nero did not grow weary, he began to feel alarm. He did not altogether understand the force which art and literature could exert over the mind of Nero. For the emperor prided himself upon his fine taste and his delicate sentiment. He thought that a great poet was lost to the world when he had to become emperor. This was one of the very strongest convictions in his singular and contradictory nature. Tigellinus did not lay sufficient stress on this, for he did not understand the feeling. With Nero, everything connected with art, literature, or philosophy, amounted to a hobby. He had a profound belief in his own genius for all these, and in his excellence in these departments. His tendency toward these feelings began in his earliest years, when he was innocent, and continued till

that hour when he died, laden with guilt, and manifested itself, even in death, as the strong ruling passion. Seneca possessed an ascendancy over him for years solely from this cause, and lost it chiefly from his own lack of resources. He grew old, and no longer had that enthusiasm in these pursuits which was needed.

Cineas more than filled the place of Seneca. After all, even though he half despised the pretensions of Nero, he respected them because they were sincere. For himself, he had an unfeigned love for the beautiful, wherever found, and an enthusiastic devotion to all that was elevated in art, or literature, or philosophy. That enthusiasm grew stronger as years passed on, and as he was yet young, it never seemed forced or unnatural. He was always fresh and original. His criticisms were always sound and just. Above all, he was Greek, and had to an extraordinary degree the exquisite taste, the subtle intellect, and the venerable genius of his race. He had a wider view of life, and a broader intelligence, than Tigellinus, and from the first understood perfectly that twofold character of Nero, which was also such a mystery to the other. He knew that it was possible for a man to love vice and literature at the same time, and to be at once an ardent lover of philosophy or art, and a monster of cruelty. He knew that intellectual refinement could exist side by side with moral impurity, and only saw in Nero what he had already seen, to a less degree, in other men. So he had this advantage all along, that he understood the man with whom he had to deal, and thus was always able to act in such a way as to preserve his influence.

Tigellinus, therefore, became exceedingly jealous of this Athenian, who occupied a position to which it would be ridiculous for him to set up a rivalry, even if he had any desire to do so. He tried in vain to weaken Nero's love for these pursuits of taste. He exhausted all his ingenuity in devising new pleasures, but the only result was, that after his master had ob-

tained what enjoyment he could, a reaction came, and he was sure to return with fresh ardour to his literary employments. At one time Tigellinus began to fear that the emperor might give himself up to these, to the exclusion of all other things, and then what would he do? His occupation would be gone, and he must sink at once into his original obscurity.

The envy of Tigellinus was so manifest that Nero himself noticed it, and used to laugh about it to Cineas.

"This man," said he, "is a beast, an unmitigated beast, and thinks all other men are beasts. He has no idea of the charm which intellectual pursuits can exert. He would stare if I told him that I enjoy making poetry as much as eating at one of his most exquisite banquets. He is very good in his way, and perhaps in that way indispensable; but it is a low way after all, and an entirely brutish way. Thank the gods, the cares of state have never shaken my old love for literature. If I had to live this life over, I should choose to be born in Athens, and live a calm philosophic life.

"He doesn't understand you," continued Nero, "any more than me. He thinks you a rival. How ridiculous! That would be as though a god should wish to rival a dog; for you, my dear philosopher, live in thought the life of a god—such a life as seems best of all lives, in my judgment; but he lives as beasts live, without any higher thought than the gratification of his appetite. To pass from him to you, is like rising into a higher plane of life."

Cineas acknowledged with his usual graceful modesty the kindness of the emperor in passing upon him so unmerited a compliment, but had too much dignity to utter a word about his enemy, good or bad. He feared nothing from him, for he felt that he could find means to attract Nero for some years longer if he chose.

One day, however, Cineas, on his way to the palace, saw something which excited some uneasiness. He saw Tigellinus

in earnest conversation with one whose face was well known to the Athenian. It was Hegio.

It was not at all strange that the Syrian should have found his way to Tigellinus; and, indeed, it was quite probable, as Cineas felt that he had been in his employ ever since Labeo had dismissed him, although it had never happened until this time that Cineas had seen him. All this Cineas thought, and still the sight of this man thus in the employ, as it seemed, of his enemy, seemed to promise future trouble. Tigellinus had power to pull down the loftiest. In his train was a crowd of vile informers who were ready to swear to anything, and perjure themselves a thousand times over for their master's sake. Cineas knew too well the names of many who had fallen beneath the power of this miscreant; the names of some were whispered about among the people, with shudders for their fate and execrations for their murderers. The sight of Hegio made him feel as though the danger might come unexpectedly upon himself and his own friends, involving them all in one common ruin.

But his determination was soon taken, and that was to go on as he was doing. Perhaps, after a while, Tigellinus might perceive that his position did not affect him at all, and desist from his efforts. At any rate, he resolved to continue as before.

He now made himself more agreeable than ever to Nero, displayed new powers which he had never exhibited before, and entered more largely into Nero's peculiar literary tastes. He made some rhymes in Greek, which filled the emperor with delight, for he saw in this what he considered as a reception of his own idea by the man whose genius he respected most. He made known to him new modes of metre, and new secrets in sculpture. He also brought him a lost poem of Alcæus, which had been preserved in his family, and presented it to him with great parade.

Nero's intense partiality for everything Greek made him

receive all these new efforts of Cineas with a pleasure equal to that of a child who received some toy for which he has longed for years. Cineas soon found out that his position was more secure than ever. In fact, he became so indispensable to the emperor, that it interfered very much with his own wishes and movements, and made him regret that he had ever entered the palace. He began to fear that he would never be allowed to leave it.

There is no doubt that Nero's partiality was sincere, and also that it was a permanent feeling, from the simple fact that Cineas stood alone without a rival. No other man combined the same attractions in one and the same person. Nero saw in him a Greek and an Athenian of the noblest lineage ; a man who had complete control over all Greek art, and letters, and philosophy ; a master of delicate compliment—a man of noble and god-like presence, easy in manner, delightful in conversation, and, above all, not ambitious. Cineas had absolutely not one thing to ask from Nero. His vast wealth and his historic name made him content. He had nothing to gain. He alone, of all the Court, had no ulterior designs. This was more than could be said even of Seneca. For all these things, and above all for this last, which he himself knew perfectly well, and often alluded to, Nero would not willingly lose his new associate.





XX.

The Return of the Prodigal Son.

THOUGH intent upon pleasing the emperor, Cineas still visited occasionally the Christian meetings, sometimes seeing here the great apostle, but never seeking any closer communication with him than that which he might have as a general auditor. This may have been either from the feeling that he could learn nothing, or, on the other hand, that he might hear too much and be convinced by one who was not a philosopher. Whatever the cause may have been, however, he continued to hold aloof from the one who could have done more than any other to show him the way to that Truth which he sought.

It happened once, at one of these meetings, that he was startled at seeing a well-known face. It belonged to one whom he had not seen for years, and now this one appeared before him as a leader in the Christian assembly.

It was Philo of Crete.

Very much changed had he become. When Cineas saw him last he was a young man, but now his hair seemed turned prematurely gray. His old expression had passed from his face. Formerly he carried in his countenance that which bore witness to the remorse within his heart, but now all that had departed, and the pale, serene face which appeared before Cineas had no expression save one of peace.

He had found this then at last, the peace for which he longed,

and here among these Christians. This fact opened before Cineas thoughts which he had not known before. The master had failed, but Philo had sat at the feet of a greater Master.

After the meeting was over, Cineas went up to him. Philo had recognized him also, and eagerly embraced him. For some time they looked in silence at one another.

"Have you been long in Rome?" said Cineas, at last.

"I only arrived here yesterday."

Then another pause. Philo was the first to speak,—

"You see that I have changed."

"Yes," said Cineas; "you are an old man before your time."

"I have had a greater and a better change than that."

"You have found, then, that which you wished?" asked Cineas, with anxious sympathy.

"Yes, noble Cineas," said Philo, with deep solemnity, "I have found peace. I have learned a wisdom greater than that of Socrates. I have heard One who said, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' I have come to him and he has given rest."

Philo spoke half to himself, like one soliloquising. Suddenly he looked earnestly at Cineas, and in a tremulous voice said,—

"Cineas, you know my story. I seek over the world for *her*."

He paused. Cineas bowed his head. He well knew to whom Philo alluded.

"I have never found her," continued Philo in mournful tones; "no, never so much as a trace of her. I try to work for my Lord, but my work is only half-hearted, and will be so till I find her, till I know the worst. And I will travel all over the world till I die, but I will seek her."

Philo turned away and buried his face in both his hands.

"O Philo!" cried Cineas, seizing his arm in a convulsive grasp, "you have come to the end of your search!"

Philo turned, trembling with agitation, and regarded Cineas with an awful look.

“You would not dare to speak slightly!”

“She is here in Rome,” said Cineas.

Philo fell upon his knees, and bowing his head, and clasping his hands, he remained motionless, but his heart poured out all its love and gratitude to Him who had thus answered the prayers, and the longings, and the search of the weary years.

Then he rose, and clutching the arm of Cineas, he said, in a scarce audible whisper,—

“Take me to her.”

And the two hurried away.

Philo said not a word as he went along. He did not even ask Cineas how he knew that this one to whom he was leading him was the right person. In his profound faith in God, he took this at once as an answer to prayer, even as though Cineas had come all the way from Greece for the especial purpose of leading him to her.

He spoke not a word, but the tight grasp, and the nervous trembling of his arm, showed his emotion. He was overwhelmed by the suddenness of this blessed news, and in the multitude of his thoughts he could not speak.

Cineas, on the other hand, said nothing, but thought how he might best have the news broken to the nurse. He knew her feeble state, and her nervous weakness. A great shock, whether of joy or grief, might be too much for her. This was his dread. He could think of no way, and therefore determined to commit the task of preparation to Helena.

At length they reached the house, and then Cineas spoke for the first time since they left, and told Philo his plan. He took his friend up to a room where he might remain unmolested for a time, and then went to his sister.

Helena agreed to do what she could, but she felt very doubtful about her success. She feared for the effect of this sudden

joy. The nurse had indeed recovered, but her strength at best was frail. A sudden excitement would invariably make her heart beat so violently that she could scarcely breathe. The grief of years, and many sleepless nights, and bitter agony endured in those lonely vigils, had all brought her to this.

And now, when Helena sought the nurse, doubting her power to break the news fittingly, and trembling for the result, she showed disturbance in her face, and when the nurse saw her enter the room she looked at her in surprise. As for Helena, she could think of no roundabout way by which the news could be skilfully unfolded. Not knowing any good way, she concluded to say whatever came uppermost.

So, in as calm a tone as she could use, she said: "Cineas has heard something to-day which he wished me to tell you"—

No sooner had Helena said this than she repented, and stopping short, she looked at the nurse, and felt frightened at the effect of these simple words.

For the nurse leaned back in her seat, and stared fixedly at Helena with a strange, wild expression, and her heart beat with fierce, fast bounds, so that her whole frame was shaken.

"He saw a man in the city," said Helena, with a trembling voice, and her eyes filled with tears, "and this man told him something which he wished you to know. But, oh, my dearest, why do you tremble so? Be calm! Can you not come to yourself?"

And Helena caught the nurse in her arms, and kissed her pale, white face, and implored her to be calm.

"Ah, dearest," said the nurse, in a faint voice, "I am not able to control my feelings. I know well what you have to tell about. There is only one kind of message which Cineas would send to me. It is of *him*. But tell it. Don't fear for me. Whether I am calm or not is no matter. I can bear it. You came to tell me of his death. He is gone, and I will not see him again in this life."

"No," said Helena.

"No! Is it not of him?"

"Yes."

"And what else have you to tell? Oh, I pray you, do not keep me in suspense."

"He is not dead."

"He—is—not—dead?" repeated the nurse, rousing herself, and looking at Helena with a strange, supplicating glance. "Not dead? And you came to tell me this? And this man that you speak of, where is he? Who is he?"

"You can see him, and ask him yourself. But, oh, be calm." But the nurse trembled more than ever.

"Oh, has he been spared? Is he alive? And where? And who can bring him to his mother? Where can I go to see him before I die? Not much longer can I live. Did he send a message? Did he ever mention my name? Is he near me, or far away? Is he too far to come to me before I die? Oh, speak, and do not look at me so strangely. What do you mean by those tears? If he is not dead, why do you weep?"

"Because—because," said Helena, "I fear for you. You tremble so. You cannot bear the shock."

"The shock! What shock? To hear that my boy lives? Ah, what have you to say? What terrible thing remains? Have I not borne the worst—the worst? Can anything worse remain?"

And a deep terror showed itself in the face of the nurse, and she sat erect and rigid, with clasped hands, fearing to hear of some new thing.

"Oh, my dearest. There is nothing like that. I fear that you will be killed, not by terror, but by joy."

"Joy!"

The nurse clutched Helena's arm, and tried to speak, but could not.

"He is a Christian. He preaches Christ. He goes over the world searching after you. Can you bear that joy?"

"No, no, I cannot bear it!" cried the nurse; and she fell down and buried her face in her hands, and burst into a torrent of tears. And there Helena stood, wringing her hands, and looking at the venerable form of her friend as it was shaken by convulsive sobs, and reproaching herself incessantly. Yet she knew not how else she could have done. But she did not know how one so feeble could survive all this. She hastened to bring it all to an end.

"Oh," cried she, twining her arms about the nurse's prostrate form, "what can I say? Rouse yourself. Shall I tell you all? Will not the joy kill you?"

"More joy," said the nurse, raising herself, and still trembling. "More? What! more? What more can remain? Is it that I shall see him?"

"It is," said Helena. "You shall see him, and soon."

"Oh, I know it all. And you have been trying to break it to me. He is in Rome. He knows that I am here. He is coming to see me. And I shall see him,—my boy, my child, my darling, my precious son! O dearest mistress! bring him soon. If I am to be killed, it will be by delay. Nothing can save me but his quick arrival. Oh, bring me my boy. Where can I find him? I will go after him. Tell me where my boy is."

And the nurse clung to Helena's arm, and moaned about her boy, with a strange wild longing—a deep yearning which words are feeble to express—a hunger of maternal love, all of which showed what a passion burned beneath this calm exterior. And now this passion all burst forth and blazed up above all restraint, consuming all other feelings.

But Helena was spared any further delay. As the nurse spoke and prayed, a sob was heard, and a man rushed into the room and caught her in his arms. Instantly, in spite of the

ravages of sorrow and of time—in spite of gray hairs, as gray as her own—in spite of the transformation which had been wrought in that face by the remorse of years, succeeded by the peace that Christ had given—in spite of all these things, the mother recognized the lineaments of the son ; and it was with a cry that expressed the longing and the desire of years, that told of hope deferred at last satisfied, and agony turned to joy, and sorrow to ecstasy,—it was with such a cry as this—memorable to Helena, in whose ears it rang long afterwards—that the nurse flung herself upon the heart of her son, and wept there, and moaned inarticulate words, half of endearment, half of prayer.

The son gently raised his mother in his arms and lifted her to a couch, where he sat by her side, still straining her to his heart, accompanying her agitation with an emotion as deep and as harassing. Strange that overpowering joy should be a thing almost terrible !

Helena saw all this, and left the room to these two, for their happiness was a holy thing, in which no other might intrude. Yet she feared none the less for the result. Could that feeble nurse sustain the effect of such a shock ? She feared, and tried to hope, but could not.

She sought Cineas, and in her deep anxiety told him all, and his grave face and apprehension confirmed her fears.

Hours passed away, yet not a sound was heard. Both Helena and Cineas were too anxious to retire to rest. They waited in silence, looking at one another, or on the floor, wondering what those hours might bring forth, fearing too, and while wishing an end to come to suspense yet dreading that end. To Helena there was the worst fear, for she had grown to love the nurse like a mother.

At length day began to dawn, and Helena, unable any longer to endure this suspense, thought herself justified in entering the room once more. She stole in quietly, and went slowly up to the couch.

There Philo was seated, with his mother half reclining against him, holding both his hands tightly, and looking up into his face with a rapt expression. But the face that evinced rapture had changed in its nature since Helena had left, and as she looked her heart stood still. That face, always emaciated, had now become thinner and sharper, and there was a light in her eyes which seemed unearthly. Her lips were bloodless, and dark circles were around her eyes.

The form of Helena stooping over her, roused her, and drew her attention for a moment from her son.

“O my loved mistress,” she said in a faint, hollow voice, that seemed not like her own. “He loves me—my boy—my child—my darling. He says he has always loved me. He says he has been searching after me for years ; yes, years.”

Helena stooped down with tearful eyes, and kissed the nurse’s forehead. She shuddered, for that forehead was cold and damp.

Philo said not a word, but gazed with all his soul on his mother, but there was a sadness in his face which looked like a foreboding of something different from happiness. He noticed the shudder of Helena, and looked up, and mournfully shook his head.

“He says he loves me,” said the nurse, faintly, “and that he will never, never leave me again—till I die.”

“Till you die,” sighed Helena, half unconsciously repeating her words.

Philo bowed down his head low over his mother. Ah, poor, weary, worn sufferer ! faintly the breath came and went, and the wild throbbing of that aching heart had changed to a fainter pulsation, that grew fainter yet faster as the time passed by.

“Mother dearest,” said Philo at last, “will you not try and sleep now ? You are so weak. I have caused you suffering through your life, and now I bring you a worse pang by my return.”

"Suffering?" said the nurse. "Do not reproach yourself, my child; I have had dear friends, and here is one who of all dear ones is the most dear."

Helena then tried to urge her to take rest and try and sleep.

"No, no," she said. "Let me alone now. When sleep comes I will welcome it, but I cannot sleep yet. Let me be with my boy. For I have mourned him for years as one dead, and he comes to me like one from the dead. And he is mine again, as when I held him a little child to my heart."

Tears flowed faster from Helena's eyes. Could not she herself understand all that mother's love and longing? She well could. But she wept, for she feared the end of all this. Now the time passed, and day grew brighter, and already there was a stir in the household. The nurse seemed to grow fainter, but still she held the hands of her son.

"Blessed be He," she said at last, "who has heard all my prayers, and answered them all; who has promised heaven, and kept his promise, and made my heaven begin on earth."

"I shall go back to sorrow never again," she continued, after a pause; "never again. I shall go on in joy. I shall pass from this happiness to a higher.

"I shall go from my son to my Saviour; from earth to heaven."

Philo took her in his arms with a passionate sob, and drew her nearer to himself. Helena took her thin hands and chafed them. Their icy coldness sent a chill of fear through all her being. She saw what the end might be.

But the nurse lay without heeding them, still looking up, with her longing eyes, at her son's face, as though that longing could never be satisfied.

"Will you not try and sleep, mother?" said Philo in a voice of despair.

"Sleep will come in its own time," said the nurse. "Do not try and force it on me. Do not leave me. Stay by me. Hold me

fast, my own ; let me cling to your hand. Let my eyes devour your face—O face of my son ! my long lost ! my loved !”

Her lips murmured words which meant love, and that mother’s heart, in its deathless love, had all its feelings fixed on her son. So, with her lips murmuring words that were not heard, but none the less understood—so she lay till at last sleep did come, a light, restless sleep, in which she waked at the slightest effort to move her.

But the sleep grew deeper, and Philo at length disengaged himself, and placed her in an easier position. Then he knelt by her side and held her hands, for so she had charged him, and her command was holy. He held her hands, and he kneeled by her side, watching every breath, with thoughts rushing through his mind and memories coming before him—such thoughts as break the heart, such memories as drive men mad.

What could Helena do ? She could do nothing. Her only feeling was one of fear. What hope could she have that this poor worn-out frame might ever survive all this ? Never before had she known what feeling animated this sorrowing mother. Now she saw something which threw a new light over the past, and made her understand the full measure of that sorrow which arose out of such love. Stricken heart ! could she wish that it might have any other lot than an entrance into eternal rest ?

Helena again left the room, but remained near, where she could hear the slightest sound, and waited with the feeling of one that waits for his doom. For the boding fear of her heart could not now be banished. As the hours passed it grew stronger.

At last there came a summons.

It came piercingly, fearfully.

It was a shriek of despair, the cry of a strong man in his agony ; and Helena rushed back once more and saw it all.

Yes, the end had indeed come.

The nurse lay with her face formed into an expression of heavenly peace and calm, with a radiant smile ; but the smile was stony, and the calm face was fixed. Over her hung Philo, moaning for her, and crying out,—“ O mother ! My mother ! You cannot, you will not leave me ! O my mother, I have killed you ! ”

All was over. The pure spirit had passed away. Yes, as she once said, “ Rest had come at last ; ” and all the sorrow, and all the sighing, that in her life had come to her in so large measure, had now been left behind with that inanimate form, and the smile on the face remained to show that if she had left her son she had gone to her Saviour, and earth had been exchanged for heaven.

For she had known that she was dying, and so she had crowded all life into those last moments, and all the love that she had felt for years. She had lavished it all upon her son, and she knew that this was the last of earth, and she blessed God that he had made it so sweet.

All this Helena learned afterward from Philo, but not now.

For now he knelt there crushed and overwhelmed, forgetting himself, forgetting his Christian faith, mindful only of this one great grief, and in his despair thinking only of this, that he had killed her.

For this man had learned the way of pardon, and had found peace for his troubled conscience ; but, nevertheless, there remained the memory of his fearful sin, which no thought of pardon could so allay but that it created self-reproach and remorse, that were always ready to assail him. Now, over the dead form of that mother, so wronged and so loved, there came a double pang—the thought of his own sin, and the agony of bereavement. It was this that crushed him, and shut out all consolation from his heart. Thus a great sin will always bring great remorse. The consciousness of pardon may quell that remorse for a time, but the memory of the past

can never die; and so long as this life lasts, will the remembrance of crime afflict the soul.

"I have killed her," moaned Philo; and this was his only thought. And so he had, for was there ever a worse crime than his? All that he might suffer now was as nothing when compared with the suffering that he had inflicted on her. Yes, he had killed her, and through life he would have to carry this recollection.

Sadly and wearily Helena went away to seek some rest and sleep, but the son still knelt beside his mother. He had closed her eyes. What thoughts had he as he knelt there? Did he think of all the years of agony which had been hers; those years which she in her deep love had tried to make him believe were happy ones, passed in the society of kind and sympathizing friends; or did he think rather of that deep love that lived in her latest glance, and spoke forth in her last breath? Whatever he thought of, it could be nothing less to him than utter anguish. For the love which she expressed, with all its comfort, brought a sting with it. This was the love that he had outraged. Ay, let him kneel, and cry; let his soul wrestle with the woe of that bereavement. In his deepest sorrow he will only feel a part of that which she had to endure through the long years of that slavery to which he had doomed her.

The days passed, and the time came when she must be buried. The Christian did not commit the body of his dead to the flames. Inspired by the hope of the resurrection, he chose rather to place it in the tomb. He was unwilling to reduce it to ashes, and thought even the funeral flames a dishonour to that body which he considered the temple of God.

There was a place which the Christians of Rome had chosen for the burial of their dead, which seemed to have been arranged by Providence for this especial purpose. In so crowded a city as Rome, where the houses ran out far into the country, it was not easy to find a place which could be used for burial. The

poor were interred without the Esquiline gate. The rich burned the bodies of their dead, and sometimes buried them, but they had private tombs. For the Christians, who were poor, and could not afford to have private burial-places, the Esquiline field seemed abhorrent, partly from the careless way in which the bodies were interred, partly from the crowded state of the field. A higher motive also made them turn away from this public burial-place. They looked forward always to the resurrection, and awaited the time when the body should rise at the sound of the last trump. They, therefore, chose rather some place for their own exclusive use, as though even in death they wished to come out from among the heathen and be separate.

And now to this little community, with these feelings and desires, there appeared a place which offered them all that they wanted—a place destined in after-ages to be filled with Christian dead, and sometimes also, in seasons of persecution, with Christian living, who should seek safety there, till in the end it should become a vast Christian Necropolis, a wonder to later times.

They found it not outside of the city, but beneath it.

For ages the Romans had obtained from that quarter the sand which they used for cement. There were strata of this sand, and also of hard volcanic rock; but, in addition to this, there was a vast extent composed of soft porous rock, which was very easily excavated. Passages had already been cut through this to facilitate the conveyance of the cement, and it was in these subterranean places that the Christians found a place for their dead.

A sad procession moved from the house of Labeo, carrying the body of the nurse to her last place of rest. They traversed a large part of the city, and went out of the Porta Capena, down the Appian Way. Here, on either side, arose the tombs of the great families of Rome, prominent among all the mausoleum of Cæcilia Metella.

Not far from this, on the opposite side of the way, there was a rude shed, under which was an opening, with steps that led down under-ground. Around this opening were heaps of sand, and men were there, whose pallid faces showed that they were the fossors who excavated the sand below. Down this descent the funeral procession passed, and when they had reached the bottom they lighted their torches, and a man who seemed familiar with the place led them along.

This man led the way with an unhesitating step, and the rest followed. It was a wild, weird scene. The passage was about seven feet high, and not more than four feet wide. The walls on either side were rough, and bore the marks of excavating tools. The torches served to illumine the scene but faintly. The darkness that opened before them was intense.

At length they came to a place where the walls were covered with tablets. Here the Christian graves began. These tablets bore their simple epitaphs. Often these epitaphs were rudely cut and badly spelled, but in a few the lettering and the expression were more elegant. In them all, however, the sentiment was the same—a sentiment which showed hope, and faith, and peace. For on them all was this one word—Peace.

EUSEBIA IN THE PEACE OF CHRIST.

VALERIA SLEEPS IN PEACE.

CONSTANTIA IN PEACE.

LAURINIA, SWEETER THAN HONEY, SLEEPS IN PEACE.

DOMITIANUS, AN INNOCENT SOUL, SLEEPS IN PEACE.

Such epitaphs as these appeared on both sides as the procession moved slowly along, and spoke in the most expressive manner of that peace that passeth understanding, which the gospel of Christ gives, not in life only, but even in the mystery of death.

At last they came to a place where there was a wider area. There was something like a small chamber, where the roof rose to a height of about fifteen feet, and the floor was about twenty

feet in diameter. Here the bearers laid down the bier, and all stood in silence.

Julius was there, for he had now identified himself to a great extent with the Christians. Cineas also was there, for he had come to see the last resting-place of one in whom he had taken such a deep interest. Philo, too, was there, still crushed by his grief, and kneeling in his speechless woe by the side of the bier.

But there was another there, in whose face a lofty enthusiasm had driven away all gloom. He could sympathize with the sorrow of the mourner, but he saw no cause to weep for the dead. He had learned something of that mystery of death which enabled him to triumph over its terrors, and he could speak to others words which imparted to them his own high confidence. To him death was nothing that was to be feared. He lived a life which made him brave its worst terrors continually. He knew that it was but the dawn of another life and not merely the end of this, and thought that no Christian should dread that from which Christ had taken all terror.

Here, then, amid the gloom of a subterranean chamber which was only lighted by the red glow of torches, the little company gathered around the dead and listened to the words of Paul.

It was amid the gloom of this under-world that Paul lifted up his voice in prayer, and the words that were spoken in that prayer were such as well suited the place, for they were the cry of one calling "out of the depths" upon that One who sat enthroned in the Highest, but ever listening—of one who turned from the darkness of earth, typified in these sombre vaults, to where in heaven there shone the light of that hope which is full of immortality. This man who prayed here was one who told others to pray without ceasing; prayer with him was the breath of his life, and he who thus prayed for himself knew best how

to pray for others. Yet this prayer of his was not for the dead, but for the living.

Now the voice of prayer ceased, and all stood in deep silence round the form of the departed. The grief of Philo was communicated to these tender, these sympathetic hearts. They mingled their tears with his.

But now, amid the silence, there arose a strain so sweet and so sad, that it thrilled through all the being of Cineas, and rang in his memory afterward for many a long year.

The early Christians had at first come out from among the Jews, and in their meetings they preserved the traditions of the synagogue. The chants of old psalms were prominent among these. The Gentile Christians adopted these old Jewish forms, and the chant lived side by side with the hymn.

But the chant that arose now sounded forth words to which the Christian alone could attach any meaning. To the Jew in his synagogue they had none. To the Christian they meant everything; they were divine words, which carried within them a lofty consolation at all times; but now, over the form of the dead, and among the graves of the departed, they gave triumph to the soul.

“ I know that my Redeemer liveth,
And that he shall stand, at the latter day, upon this earth :
And though after my skin, worms destroy my body,
Yet in my flesh shall I see God :
Whom I shall see for myself,
And mine eyes shall behold, and not another ;
Though my veins be consumed within me.”

Down through the long vaulted passages the sound was borne, passing on, in its wild cadences, till it died out in hollow murmurs far away. And the hope, and the solemn exultation of that song seemed to convey a new feeling into all the hearers. Cineas bowed his head, and yielded himself up to the emotion that overpowered all. He knew to whom and to what that song referred. The Redeemer, the resurrection, these

were its themes ; and he saw something which made death lose its terrors.

And there, on his knees, Philo felt a new rush of feeling, which broke in upon his remorse and his despair. He raised his head and looked upward, with streaming eyes ; but an expression of hope was on his face, and they all knew that his soul's agony had at last been conquered by faith.

Next to redemption, the great doctrine that attracted the Christian of this time was that of the resurrection. He awaited from day to day the coming of the Lord. He buried his dead, and knew that at the last trump they would rise again. As the Lord himself had risen, so would all his followers. For this he glorified God, and in this he exulted.

In this doctrine Paul also rejoiced, and preached it everywhere. It was, in his eyes, one of the grandest facts in Christianity. It gave something for the strong reliance of the soul. Yet with all this he did not teach that the soul should sleep till this resurrection, or that it could not exist without the body.

While he cherished so ardently this grand doctrine, and laid so much stress on the resurrection, he had no idea that the soul, after death, could pass into even a temporary oblivion. For he habitually spoke of his desire to depart and be with Christ, knowing that his departure from this world would be an immediate entrance into the next ; and knowing, too, as he himself said, that to be absent from the body was to be present with the Lord. Best of all, he knew it from his own high experience, on that time when he had been caught up into the unutterable glories of the world of light.

And such things he spoke at this time, and his words brought new comfort to the bereaved son.

It was with such words in their ears, and such thoughts in their hearts, that the little company lifted the body of the departed into her last resting-place.

It was Philo whose hands arranged those dear remains, whose eyes took the last look, and who for the last time pressed her cold forehead with his lips. He lifted up the tablet which shut in the opening of the narrow cell, and on that tablet there were the following words:—

“IN CHRIST—PEACE.

“THE SORROW OF CLYMENE ON EARTH LED TO EVERLASTING BLISS IN HEAVEN. HER SON PHILO SET UP THIS STONE IN TEARS.”





XXI.

The Resolbe.



AFTER that solemn burial scene, Julius made up his mind to delay no longer about a step which he had purposed taking for some time.

“Why should I not join them at once?” said he to Cineas. “All my sympathies are with them, and have been now for a long time. I have no desires or tastes anywhere else. The meek lives and the mutual affection of these men would affect me even if there were nothing more; even if there were no high aim after eternal life, which pervades all their thoughts, and makes this life seem only a short and temporary stay.

“And now I find that this aim is my own chief desire. I wish to secure the same immortality, and, besides, that immortal life in which they believe—an immortality of happiness and of love.

“Cineas, I long and yearn to be one of them, not merely to stand among them as an external sympathizer, but to be numbered among them, and to hear and give the salutation of ‘Brother.’ Could I—if all else had failed to move me—could I be unshaken by that spectacle of radiant hope that but lately lighted up the souls of those who buried their dead in those gloomy vaults, and knew that the departed was not dead but alive, and knew where that soul was, and what? I can now delay no longer. I believe that this religion is the revelation of the Supreme. I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that the soul that believes on him shall have life everlasting.”

Cineas heard this without surprise, for he well knew how strongly Julius had been drawn towards the Christians ever since his memorable voyage with Paul. He felt a kind of envy of his friend, and for a moment wished that he himself might have the same calm faith. For it was his nature to question all things ; he struggled with doubt that rose behind every belief, and the habit of a lifetime of speculation could not readily be lost.

“ I am glad, my friend,” said he, in tones that expressed a pensive melancholy, “ glad that you at least have decided so. For me it is very different. Yet I confess that I am shaken to the soul by the memory of all that I have heard and seen. The song that arose out of those vaults seemed to me like the soul of the dead rising from the gloom of the sepulchre, and soaring upward to its God. I admire that faith which can enter into the mind of the humblest and most ignorant, and make him believe in a spiritual life, and live so as to attain to it. I wonder, too, at the power of that religion which can change an ignorant, untutored man, and make him turn all his thoughts and affections to a lofty spiritual idea. How comes it? You will answer that it comes from God. Be it so. At any rate, all that I know is that he has not yet given to me a belief that all this came from him.

“ If I believed as you do, with your unquestioning faith, I would do as you propose at any sacrifice. But I do not and cannot believe so.”

“ But why not?” said Julius. “ Does not Plato himself testify to the truth of an Incarnate God? You yourself have often acknowledged that God might descend among men. If so, is it difficult to believe that he might suffer? I do not know so much as you, but I have studied Plato, and well I remember how the master used to comment on some wonderful passages. Do you not remember how Socrates says :—‘ It is not possible that any man should be safe, who sincerely

opposes either you or any other people, and who prevents many unjust and illegal acts from being committed in a state ?' Socrates affirms that to a holy being death is imminent. And do you not remember the well-known definition of the just man in the discussion about justice, in the second book of the *Republic*, where the speaker, after mentioning the just man, goes on to maintain that the Just One should have nothing but his own righteousness to sustain him ? 'Let him be without everything except righteousness : without doing injustice, too, let him have the reputation of the greatest, in order that he may be put to the test for justice, and not be moved to reproach and its consequences, but rather be unchangeable till death, seeming, indeed, to be unjust through life, though really just.'

"Do you not, above all, remember what the speaker in that dialogue affirmed would be the lot of such a man ? ' *The Just One, thus situated, will be scourged, tortured, fettered, have his eyes burned out, and after suffering all manner of evils, will at last be crucified.*' "

These words were spoken by Julius with a solemnity and an emphasis that showed how deep a meaning he attached to them. He then remained silent for a time, and Cineas, who seemed quite startled, said nothing. The passage was well known to him ; it had come up more than once in the discussions of "the master," but though he had been familiar with the character of Christ for some time, it had never occurred to him to refer it to him. Now, when he saw them so applied, he saw the full meaning of Julius. For Christ was in his eyes the All Holy, the Perfect Just, the One who in his life was considered unjust by his enemies, who was slandered and reviled, who had nothing of his own except his righteousness and holiness. And what was his fate ? Was not he scourged and tortured ? Was not he, after suffering all manner of evils, finally crucified ? This thought for a time overwhelmed Cineas, and Julius, seeing the effect of it, said nothing.

At length Cineas recovered himself.

"Most admirable is your argument, Julius," said he. "Plato is assuredly a witness for Christ ; and I am glad that you have shown me a new application for these passages. I am quite willing to read them as you do. For I admire the pure and unsullied character of the One whom you so love ; I revere his lofty virtue and his constancy till the end. Of all these I have heard enough to touch my heart. But you ask of me far more than this.

"I will go so far as to say, that if God should manifest himself to man, such a manifestation as this would not be unworthy even of the Deity. Such a life as this might not be inconsistent with divine grandeur. But when you ask me to look at him on the cross, I recoil in horror. Can this be the Divine One who thus endures death ?

"I pass by the shame, the insult, and the agony. I look only at the one fact of death. It matters not to me that, as you say, he rose again. I can look no further than the one fact of his death. That is enough. To me it is simply inconceivable that God, under any circumstances, should suffer death."

To this Julius answered, that Christ died to atone for sin. All men are sinners, and subject to the wrath of God. Unless they can obtain pardon, they must suffer for ever.

To this doctrine Cineas expressed the strongest repugnance.

"I acknowledge," said he, "that there is much sin in the world ; but a large number of men are simple good-hearted folk, and to say that they are under God's wrath, and liable to eternal punishment, seems so shocking that I do not think it deserves discussion.

"To *pardon sin*, you say. What sin ? I deny that all men are sinners. I know many good, and wise, and holy men, who have done nothing to merit any future punishment, and who, in fact, should receive in the future nothing but blessedness. For myself, I do not see what I have done that needed such

suffering on my behalf. You will say that he died for me. Why should he die for me? What punishment have I deserved, that he should take it upon himself and suffer in my place?

"I, from my earliest youth, have tried to seek after truth and God. Is this sin? I have given myself up to this life-long pursuit. Have I incurred God's wrath—the wrath of One whom my soul craves to know and seeks to love?

"Have I not sought after him all my life? Do I not now esteem the knowledge of him the greatest blessing that can come to man, and will he turn away his face for ever from one who seeks above all to know him? I have always endeavoured to live a pure life, and will you tell me that eternal punishment lies before me? For what? What have I ever done? Can you believe this, and yet affirm that God is just?"

This brought on a long discussion. Julius undertook to show that sin lies in thought as well as action; and that he who would examine his own heart, and compare himself with what he ought to be, would see that he was a sinner. On the other hand, Cineas maintained that such things as these were not sins, but merely imperfections, for which no one was responsible, or, at any rate, if any one was responsible, it could only be the Creator.

The discussion then went off into wide questions, but nothing could be accomplished either in one way or another. They had no common ground here. Cineas complained that Julius persisted in seeing sin in those thoughts and words which he himself considered perfectly harmless; that he gave no credit to the noble acts of valour and patriotism which men perform, but affirmed that no soul could be saved by these.

"Your whole doctrine of sin," said he, "is so excessively repugnant that the discussion is painful. Indeed, a discussion on such a subject seems to me to be useless. It is a good and a pleasant world that we see around us, and to apply the name sinners to the 'kindly race of men,' seems like saying that the world is all dark, even in its bright day-time.

"But, Julius," he said in conclusion, "believe me, I am not one who brings up a score of petty objections to a pure and elevated religion for an idle purpose. I am distressed. I am perplexed. I wish that this Christianity of yours could be made acceptable to me. But it cannot be.

"Go on as you propose. My heart shall be with you. I will stand where I am, and in my doubt will still pray to him; and if, as I have always believed, he indeed hears prayer, then surely he will at some time hear mine, feeble though it be, if not in this life, yet perhaps in the next."

Julius seized the hand of his friend and pressed it earnestly.

"There are many prayers ascending for you, and he who has promised to hear all prayer, will surely hear those which bear up your name to his ears. As to this question about sin, I can only say that I once thought as you do; but lately I seem to have received a great light in my soul, and have seen that I am sinful. Whatever you may be, I at least needed all that Christ has done. I deserved suffering; he bore it for me. I believe in him, and give myself up to him, for this life and for the life to come."

"This light that comes to your mind," said Cineas, "is something that I have never experienced. I must move on in obedience to a logical process. I must obey reason above all things. A theory stated in so many words is not enough. I must test it. If it will not stand questioning, how am I to receive it? But I will talk no more of myself. Think of me as one who approves of what you are doing, and who deems you happier than himself. It has been my lot to see Christianity bringing peace and comfort to many minds that had been disturbed by much sorrow. It brings happiness. May you possess all the happiness that it can give."

"That happiness will yet be yours, too, my best of friends, I doubt not. A longer time will be needed; but you will at last see the truth as it is in Jesus."



XXII.

Son and Father.



WHEN Julius informed his father of his decision, he met with a storm of indignant rebuke. The old man hated Christianity because it came from Syria. He indulged in his usual strain of invective against the vices of the age, and declared that Syria had ruined all things.

“Don’t tell me,” he cried, “that Christianity is different. It cannot be. It is impossible for any good thing to come out of Syria. The people are incurably vicious. From immemorial ages it has been the chosen seat of all vice, and profligacy, and obscenity. You are deceived, foolish boy. You are beguiled by a fair exterior. Wait till you learn the actual practice of these Christians. For my part, I believe all that the people say about them. I believe that they indulge in horrid vices in their secret meetings, in those out of the way places where no honest man ever thinks of going. Don’t tell me I am wrong. I am right, and I know it. You will find this out some day. There is nothing but foulness in everything Syrian. Rome is full of it. What other curse has Rome but this? Go to all the most infamous scoundrels in the city and ask them where they come from. There is only one place—Syria.”

So the old man morosely railed on. Nothing could induce him to listen to the explanation of Julius. Nothing could make him think that the Christians were in any way different

from the followers of other Syrian superstitions, with which the city was filled. He menaced Julius with his fiercest wrath. He swore he would disown him, cast him off, and curse him. There was an excited and painful interview. The old man stormed. Julius entreated to be heard, but in vain. At last, he told his father, mildly, that he was a man, responsible only to himself, and would do this, whatever the consequences might be. Whereupon old Carbo turned pale with rage, bade him be gone, and cursed him to his face.

Julius went away sadly, but his conscience sustained him. A father's curse was a terrible thing; but he knew that the impetuous old man would one day relent. He could not maintain anger or malice for any length of time. So the son expected some future time of reconciliation. Carbo would see his error, and be willing to receive his son back again to his heart.

Thus Julius joined himself to the Christians, whom he had learned to love, and whose faith he at last fully received. When once he had entered that society, and become an acknowledged follower of Christ, he found greater happiness than ever he had known before. He now fully shared the hopes, the fears, the sorrows, and the joys of this little community, who were still small in number, but felt that they possessed the truth that came down from God. And what else on earth could he desire beside this? Honour, and power, and wealth seemed poor in comparison with that which he really possessed.

Paul had been in Rome for nearly three years, and at length decided to depart, leaving this young Roman church to the care of other hands and to God. Other countries demanded his services. He had told the people of his intention, and they, though sorely distressed at the thought of losing him, nevertheless fully believed that the apostle followed the voice of God, and meekly acquiesced. They would not claim all the

labours of Paul for themselves. They knew that other lands needed him, and in their earnest desire for the salvation of other souls they were willing to let him go.

Others went with him, but chief among his followers was Philo. In the months that had succeeded his mother's death he had returned to his former calm. Still troubled often by his ever-recurring remorse, he thought the best antidote to grief would be found in incessant action. He gave himself up with the most ardent devotion to the cause which he loved. As the world was nothing to him, he fixed his heart and his thoughts with peculiar intensity on the world on high. In the yearning of his soul he thought that the spirit of his mother might yet regard him ; and that the love which she had borne still lived in her heart, in the new life which she had found.

He himself was but weak and feeble. Either from excessive nervousness, which he had inherited from his mother, or from the results of early dissipation, or the grief of later years, or from all these causes combined, his constitution was shattered, and his pale emaciated face and glowing eyes showed that in his frame he carried the seeds of death. Yet, in spite of suffering and weakness, he laboured incessantly, and chose to accompany Paul, because he knew that with such a leader he would encounter the greatest peril and be summoned to the severest labour.





XXIII.

The Burning of Rome.

IN one memorable evening, Lydia and her father were together in their room, and Lydia, at her father's request, was reading that letter which Paul had written to the Christians at Rome before his visit, and which had always been prized by them most highly.

The centurion sat in deep attention, lost in thought, and in such a profound abstraction that he thought of nothing except those divine words which fell upon his ears. But the reader was strangely disturbed, and often paused.

For outside there arose strange, mysterious sounds, the voices of a vast multitude, and mingled cries of fear and excitement. It was as though all the population of the city had gone forth into the streets on some great purpose, but under some such impulse as fear. For the cries were wild and startling, and panic reigned, and terror was stalking abroad.

In vain Lydia tried to read calmly. Calmness was impossible when the clamour grew every moment louder and louder, and outside the cries of men were borne to her ears, and inside, in every part of the vast edifice in whose topmost story they lived, there was the noise of people hurrying to and fro, and loud calls from one to another in tones of fear, and all the signs of universal trepidation and alarm.

At last, a lurid glow flashed into the chamber, and Lydia started, and cast a fearful glance out of the window. The glow

passed away, and all was dark once more. She feared, and could scarcely find voice to go on with her task. Before her arose the terror of fire, which was always the ever-present danger to all the population of Rome. It was only by a mighty effort that she was able to go on. She proceeded, and read:—

“What shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written:—

“‘For thy sake we are killed all the day long;
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’

“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

During the reading of this the cries and the clamour had increased; but the centurion heard nothing. He sat with folded arms, and eyes half-closed, looking upward with an ecstatic expression on his face, and with his lips moving as he whispered the words after his daughter.

But as Lydia ended, there came another lurid flash, which now did not pass away, but continued, steadily prolonging itself, and growing redder and more menacing.

Lydia uttered a cry, and the book fell from her hands.

The centurion started, and asked what was the matter.

Lydia pointed out of the window.

In an instant the centurion was recalled to himself.

For it was a terrible sight that now appeared.

The whole sky was red with flame ; myriads of sparks floated along, carried swiftly past them, and great clouds of dense smoke rolled by, sometimes obscuring the light of the fire for a moment, but only to let it shine out again with fresh brilliancy. That terrific glare grew brighter every second.

The centurion threw open a window in the roof, and ascended a ladder, and stood outside. Lydia followed him. A cry involuntarily escaped the old man's lips as he took a glance around. Near Mount Palatine, between it and the Cælian Mount, was the circus. Here there was an intense glow of light which dazzled the eyes. Advancing from this quarter, the flames came rolling on directly toward the street in which they lived. They saw the fire leaping from house to house in its fierce march, and moving on remorselessly to their own abode.

The wind was high, and the roar of the flames could be heard, as, fanned by that wind, they swept over the habitations of man. There had been a long season of drought, and everything in the city was parched and dry. The old houses, with their numerous stories, that rose up so loftily, were like tinder, and caught the flame as easily as possible. The prospect before them was not merely their own destruction, but universal calamity.

Below, there came up a louder cry, and the rush of a vast multitude through the narrow streets, and shrieks from terrified women. The noise was more terrific than the fire. It was as though all Rome was in the streets, flying from that dread calamity which threatened all alike. For although Rome was accustomed to fires, yet this was worse than anything which it had known, and the drought had served to prepare the city for the destroyer, and all men felt that this fierce flame, so often kept back and resisted, would now be triumphant.

But Lydia uttered another cry of fear, and seizing her father's arm, pointed away toward the opposite side.

There was need for fear. There, too, was fire. Not in one place, or in two, but in many. Bright glowing spots flecked the dark forms of the houses, where the flames leaped up, and spread on, and enfolded all things before them. So many of these fires appeared, that it seemed as though they were surrounded by a circle of flame.

"Oh, father!" cried Lydia, "what is this? Is this, then, the last day?"

"See, father, all the world seems to be on fire. Will the last summons come?"

"I know not, my daughter—who can tell?" answered the centurion. "But fear not, my child. While I live I will protect you; and if this is even the last day, you have nothing to fear."

"Oh, father," cried Lydia, shuddering, "the flames encircle us! Where can we fly to? We are enclosed in a ring of fire, and I can see no opening."

"No," said the centurion, in calm courageous tones. "The fire advances from the circus; the wind blows the flames towards us. The only danger is on that side. On the other side the fire that you see is caused by the falling sparks that have been kindled on the dry houses. There is no danger there. We can easily pass on."

"Oh, then, let us fly!"

"Certainly," said the centurion, "we must haste. We must leave everything. Well, we have not much to lose. I will put on my armour, and do you clothe yourself warmly. There is no use to try to save anything. The manuscript is all that we can carry away."

Hastily they made their preparations, and at last the centurion, in full armour, hurried away, followed by his daughter, who clung closely to him.

On their way down they found the stairs filled with people, ascending and descending, carrying their movables, and trying to save something of their property. With great difficulty they passed through this crowd, and at last reached the street. But here they found further progress impossible, for a vast crowd filled that street, and stood still, locked together, and stopped by something at the end. Out of all the houses people were pouring, and the crowd here could not easily move till all the houses before them were emptied.

“Father, father, we are lost!” cried Lydia.

“No, my daughter,” said her father; “do not fear. I have seen many such sights as this—too many. I am a soldier, and have been familiar with burning cities. It will take an hour for the flames to get to this house, and before that time the crowd will dissolve and move away. Trust in me.”

The time passed, and slowly, too, for those who thus stood in suspense, but the crowd did not make much progress. Wedged in this narrow street, it seemed as though the wretched fugitives could never escape. And every moment brought the flames nearer.

At length the houses at the head of the street began to burn. Louder shrieks arose, and hundreds, despairing of escape by the street, rushed back into the houses and clambered to the roofs, along which they passed. Vast numbers saw this and followed the idea. The streets were sensibly relieved, the crowd grew thinner, and it seemed as though escape might yet be possible.

And now the flames had come so near that the heat could be felt, and the smoke that streamed past almost suffocated the crowds in the street. Lydia began to survey the possible fate that lay before her, and expected death, but said nothing. At last the centurion spoke,—

“I would have tried the roof before, but I felt afraid about you. I think, after all, we had better try it. If the people do

not move faster they will be destroyed. I would not let myself be wedged in that crowd. If I have to die, I would rather die here."

Lydia uttered a low cry, and clung to her father. From these words she knew that death was near.

"But courage, my darling. Follow me and be firm. There is no danger."

The centurion turned, and already had his foot on the lower stair, when a tremendous crash against the wall of their building startled him.

Lydia almost swooned with terror.

But the centurion uttered a cry of joy. Again and again the sound came, with cries of men, but not cries of fear. It was a familiar sound to his ears. Often had he heard that sound before the walls and gates of beleaguered cities.

"We are saved!" cried Eubulus. "Help is near. It is the battering-ram."

"The battering-ram?" said Lydia, in a puzzle.

"The soldiers are here. They are breaking a way through for the crowd. Thank God! Thank God!"

The blows grew fiercer, and the sound came nearer. The calls of the leader and the shouts of the men were distinctly audible. The voice of that leader seemed familiar. Lydia's heart beat faster as she thought that she recognized it.

At last the wall close behind them came down with a crash, shattered by a tremendous stroke, and a cry of triumph arose from the room beyond. Another and another blow, and all the wall was broken through. Then a man dashed through the ruin, and rushed to the door.

It was Julius.

The moment that he saw them he seized Lydia's hand, and in a voice broken with emotion, he cried, "My God, I thank thee!"

Then in an instant he called to the crowd in the streets,—

"This way. This way. The soldiers have broken a way through to the Suburra!"

A cry of joy was the response.

On the instant the great crowd made a spring at that door.

Julius lifted Lydia in his arms as though she were a child, and rushed off, followed by the centurion. A wide passage had been knocked away through a whole block of houses; the huge beams supported the mass overhead, preventing them from falling in, and the new avenue was almost as wide as the narrow street. Julius went on, carrying Lydia, and followed by Eubulus; behind them came the soldiers, and after them streamed the wild crowd.

At last they came to the Suburra. Here Julius put Lydia down, and the soldiers advanced before them and behind, forcing their way.

The heavens were all aglow with the blaze. Lydia looked toward the place from which they had just come, and shuddered to see the fire spreading over those very roofs by which they had thought of escaping. She now knew how desperate was their situation.

Around them there was the wildest confusion. A vast mass of human beings hurried along, obeying one common impulse of fear, not knowing where to go, but expecting to get to some place of temporary safety. Great waggons rolled along, filled with furniture which some had sought to save; lines of litters borne by slaves conveyed away the wealthier citizens; and men on horseback mingled with the crowd on foot.

But the crowd on foot was most pitiable, as the people struggled along. Some were carrying bits of furniture, hastily snatched up, which they gradually got rid of as they found themselves overpowered by fatigue; others carried bundles of clothing; others boxes, which contained all their worldly wealth. Some carried along their sick friends, whose groans were added

to the general uproar; others their little children, whose cries of fear came up shrilly and sharply amid the confusion.

Amid that crowd there were families separated, who vainly sought to find one another. Husbands called after wives, and wives after husbands; fathers called the names of their children; but what was saddest of all, was the sight of hundreds of little children intermixed with the crowd, and sometimes pressed, and knocked down, and trampled under foot, shrieking with fear, and crying frantically, "Father!" "Mother!" But who could help them? Their fathers and mothers were lost in the crowd, and if any man had presence of mind or pity enough to help one, there were hundreds and thousands of others who needed equal help. Universal panic reigned everywhere, and the multitude was wild with fright, and unreasoning and unmerciful. And over all the din there was the roar of the pitiless flames, as they came on from behind, and danced and leaped, as if in mockery over the sorrow and fear of man.

Through all this the soldiers forced their way at a steady pace, and Lydia saw with great relief that every step took them further from danger. Julius kept her hand, and walked by her side, and the old man came behind.

"I saw it when it first broke out," said Julius to Lydia, "many hours ago. I saw that the wind blew from the circus to your quarter, and at once ran to give you warning. But I could do nothing against the crowd. Then I went back and brought these soldiers, and tried to force a way through the crowd, but could not. They were so tightly packed that it was impossible. So I determined to break through the houses, for I knew that this was the only way to get to you; and besides, I knew that even if I did not find you in the house, I could call off a great number of the people by this new avenue of escape, and so perhaps find you. But, God be thanked! I found you there, at your own door."

The voice of Julius faltered as he spoke, and he pressed

Lydia's hand tightly in his deep emotion. The maiden cast down her eyes. Amid all the surrounding panic she felt calm, as though his presence brought assured safety ; and when she first saw him come through the ruins of the house, he stood like an angel before her, and his strong words inspired her with courage that caused her to rise above the terror around.

On they went through the tumult at a steady march, until at last they turned off to the right, and after traversing several streets which were less crowded, though thronged with the alarmed multitude, they reached the foot of the Esquiline. Here Julius turned up a broad avenue, and halted his soldiers in front of Labeo's gate.

" I have a good friend here," said he, " who will be glad to give you shelter for a time, till I can find a new place for you."

He then went forward, followed by Lydia and her father, and they all entered the hall.

A few words explained all to Labeo, who received the father and daughter with the warmest welcome. Helena soon made her appearance, and when the centurion recognized in her a Christian, he felt more inclined to receive the proffered hospitality.

All that night the conflagration raged, extending itself more and more widely, engulfing whole blocks of houses, surrounding and hemming in the wretched inmates till no escape was left. The cries of men mingled with the roar of the falling houses and the noise of the devouring flames, and the light of the burning city startled the people far away in distant parts of Italy. Men hoped for morning, thinking that daylight would bring some relief, and praying, like Ajax, if they had to die, to die in the light.

Day came, but brought no relief. Horror was only intensified. One entire district of the city was either burned up or doomed to perish immediately. Men looked aghast at the towering flames which still swept on, urged forward by the

intense heat of the parts that had been already burned. Crowds of people had sought shelter in places which they deemed secure, but they now found the fire advancing upon these, and they had to fly once more. Despair prevailed everywhere. Little children wandered about, weak and almost dying from fatigue and grief, moaning after their parents ; while in other parts of the city those same parents were searching everywhere for their children. Nothing was done to stop the flames, for no one knew what to do. All were paralyzed.

The fire moved on. Block after block of houses was consumed. The streets were still filled with flying wretches. But those who fled could now fly with greater freedom, for the population were forewarned, and they were no longer overtaken by the fire in their flight.

The keepers of the public prisons fled. The keepers of the amphitheatre, and of all the public edifices, sought safety for themselves, forgetting all things in their terror.

Around the chief amphitheatre the flames soon gathered, and the fire dashed itself upon it, and soon a vast conflagration arose which surpassed in splendour the surrounding fires. All around the flames ran, passing downward, taking in all the seats and working their way to the lowest vaults. In that great edifice, with its wood-work, and its many decorations, its various apparatus, and the thousand combustible things stored there, the flames raged fiercely, throwing up a vast pyramid of fire into the air, which tossed itself into the skies, and crowned all other fires, and eclipsed them by the tremendous force of its superior glow.

And now from out the buildings connected with the amphitheatre, as the flames advanced, there came a sound that gave greater horror to all who heard it, for it was something more terrible than anything that had yet been heard. It was a sound of agony—the cry of living creatures left encaged there to meet their fate—the wild beasts of the amphitheatre. There was

something almost human in that sharp, despairing wail of fear. The deep roar of the lion resounded above all other cries, but it was no longer the lordly roar of his majestic wrath, it was no longer the voice of the haughty king of animals. Terror had destroyed all its menacing tones, and the approach of fire made his stout heart as craven as that of the timid hare. The roar of the lion sounded like a shriek, as it rose up and was borne on the blast to the ears of men,—a shriek of despair,—a cry to Heaven for pity on that life which the Creator had formed. With that lion's roar there blended the howl of the tiger and the yell of the hyæna ; but all fierceness was mitigated in that hour of fright and dismay, and in the uproar of those shrieks there was something heart-rending, which made men's hearts quake, and caused them for a moment to turn aside from their own griefs and shudder at the agony of beasts.

Here, where the flames raced and chased one another over the lofty arched side, and from which man had fled, and the only life that remained was heard and not seen, one form of life suddenly became visible to those who found occasion to watch this place, in which men saw that touch of nature which makes all men kin ; but here nature asserted her power in the heart of a lioness. How she escaped from her cell no one could say. Perhaps the heat had scorched the wood so that she broke it away ; perhaps she had torn away the side in her fury ; perhaps the side had burned away, and she had burst through the flames, doing this not for herself, but for that offspring of hers which she carried in her mouth, holding it aloft, and in her mighty maternal love willing to devote herself to all danger for the sake of her young. She seemed to come up suddenly from out the midst of flame and smoke, till she reached the furthest extremity of the edifice, and there she stood, still holding her cub, now regarding the approaching flames, and now looking around everywhere for some further chance of escape. There stood, about thirty feet away, a kind of portico which formed the



front of a Basilica, and this was the only building that was near. To this the lioness directed her gaze, and often turned to look upon the flames, and then returned again to inspect the portico. Its side stood nearest, and the sloping roof was the only place that afforded a foothold. Between the two places lay a depth of seventy feet, and at the bottom the hard stone pavement.

Nearer and nearer came the flames, and the agony of a mother's heart was seen in that beast, as with low deep moans she saw the fiery death that threatened. Already the flames seemed to encircle her, and the smoke-clouds drove down, hiding her at times from view. At last, as one cloud, which had enveloped her for a longer period than usual, rolled away, the lioness seemed to hesitate no longer. Starting back to secure space for a run, she rushed forward, and made a spring straight towards the portico.

Perhaps, if the lioness had been alone, and fresh in her strength, she might easily have accomplished the leap and secured at least temporary safety. But she was wearied with former efforts, and the fire had already scorched her. Besides this, she held her cub in her mouth, and the additional weight bore her down. As it was, her fore-paws struck the edge of the sloping roof of the portico, she clutched it madly with her sharp claws, and made violent efforts to drag herself up. She tried to catch at some foothold with her hind legs, but there was nothing. The tremendous strain of such a position could not long be endured. Gradually her efforts relaxed. At last, as though she felt herself falling, she made a final effort. Mustering all her strength, she seemed to throw herself upward. In vain. She sank back. Her limbs lost strength. Her claws slipped from the place which they had held. The next instant a dark form fell, and mother and offspring lay, a lifeless mass, on the pavement.

All the keepers of all the public places had fled, and they had left behind all the inmates. These inmates were not wild

beasts alone. Some were human beings. The jailers had fled from the prisons, and carried away or thrown away the keys. Had the crowd in the streets been less frantic, they would have done something to free the wretches whose shrieks resounded within the walls over which the flames hung threateningly. They would have burst open the doors, and saved the prisoners confined there from the worst of fates. But the people were paralyzed by fear. They had only one thought, and that was personal safety.

The great prison of Rome was situated in the very front of the fire, and on the second day, as it advanced, it gradually surrounded it. For some time the solid stone walls resisted the progress of the conflagration, but at last the intense heat that prevailed all around produced its effects here. The outer doors first caught the blaze, and then the framework of the tiled roof.

At first the inmates knew nothing of the danger that threatened them, but after a time the oppressive heat of the atmosphere filled them with dread, and the red light that flashed through the openings of the cells showed them their impending fate. Loud calls arose for the jailers; but no jailers were there to respond. Then howls, and curses, and shrieks, and prayers arose, in one vast confusion of sounds. The prisoners saw the fearful danger, and in their madness dashed themselves against the prison doors. In vain: the light grew brighter, the heat more intense, and the danger more near.

In one large room there were several hundred confined, and here the worst scenes were enacted. The windows were narrow openings only a few inches wide, with iron bars set in the hard stone. They were also ten feet above the floor. The doors were of iron, and double, with iron bars to secure them. There was not the slightest hope of escape. Here the prisoners first learned their danger, and it went from mouth to mouth till all knew it. At first they were transfixed with fear; it was as

though each man had become rooted to the spot. They looked at each other with awful eyes, and then at the narrow windows through which, even if there were no bars, no man could pass; and then at the massive iron doors, which no human strength could move from their places. They knew that the fire was surrounding them; they knew that the jailers had fled; they knew the whole truth.

Then after the first stupor came frenzy. Some dashed themselves against the door, others leaped up and tried to catch at the bars of the windows. In one place, some, mounted on the shoulders of others, tried to loosen the massive stones of the wall through which the windows were pierced. But their puny efforts were all in vain. The Roman buildings were always of the massive sort. The stones were always enormous blocks, and here in this prison they were of the largest size. All efforts to dislodge these were simply hopeless. This the prisoners soon found out, but even then they strove to move them, seeking for some one of smaller size which might not resist their efforts.

But doors and windows were alike immovable. Overhead was a vaulted roof of solid stone; beneath, a stone-paved floor. Some of the prisoners tore up the flagstones that formed the pavement, but found only huge blocks of rough-cut travertine beneath.

Meantime the fires advanced, and the heat grew more intense, till at last the desire was not so much for escape as for air and breath. Those who had worked hardest were first exhausted, and fell panting on the pavement; others sought the windows, but found the air without hotter than that within. At last despair came, and all stood glaring at the red light that flashed through the windows, and grimly and savagely awaited death.

In every cell where solitary prisoners were confined, each individual did what these others had been doing, and made the

same fierce efforts to escape by door or window, with the same result. Rome had not built a prison which might be pulled down.

Now all the building seemed to glow with the intense heat that enclosed it from the burning houses, and the roof burned and fell in, communicating the fire to the stones beneath, and the iron bars grew red-hot. From behind some of these bars there appeared hideous faces—faces of agony, where the features were distorted by pain, and the hair had fallen off at the touch of fire, and voices still called, in hoarse tones, for help, long after all hope of help had died out.

Then came curses, bitter and deep, on the emperor, on the people, on the state, and on the gods.

At last the flames rolled on over all, and the silent prison-house showed only its walls, that seemed to glow red-hot amid the conflagration.

So the second day passed into night, and the night was worse than the day. The fire had obtained complete mastery. It had extended itself in all directions, and moved onward in a wide path, as wide as the city itself, so that men as they watched it saw that all Rome was doomed. Only one thing could save it—a change of wind, or a rain-storm.

But no rain came, and the wind changed not, and through all the night the fires spread, over the houses, and over the palaces of nobles, and over the temples of the gods.

During this time the emperor had been at Antium, but when the third day came he returned to Rome. By that time the fire had approached the gardens of the Imperial Palace, and threatened to sweep over all the trees and plants, and lay low the palace itself. Near the palace were the gardens of Mæcnas, and between these two was a building which communicated with each, and this building had already fallen a prey to the conflagration. In the gardens of Mæcnas there was a palace, on the top of which was a tower which afforded a commanding

view. To this tower Nero went, and ascending it he looked around.

For three days the fires had raged, and already a vast portion of the city had fallen. Temples, towers, monuments, the relics of the past, the records of old triumphs, had been destroyed along with the houses of the common people. Far over the city, from its remotest bounds, up to that building which lay between the Imperial Palace and these gardens, the work of destruction had extended. Nero had come there after dark, either because he could not come before, or, as is more probable, because he wished to see the fine scenic effect. He had what he wished to his heart's content. The flames shone brightly amid the gloom, and shot up fiercely, and rolled on over houses hitherto untouched, finding new material at every stage of progress, and feeding itself on this. The lofty houses, which in Rome arose to a height unknown in other cities, made a fire in this city a grander spectacle than it could be elsewhere. Added to this, there was the outline of the city itself, which descended into valleys and rose up into hills. From where Nero stood he could see it all to the best advantage. It seemed like a sea of fire, where billows of flame mingled with smoke rolled incessantly onward, and dashed against those loftier eminences that rose like islands in the midst. Yet those eminences themselves did not escape, for the fires clambered upward, and passing from house to house, from palace to palace, and from temple to temple, covered all, till all glowed with equal intensity. The sky was all ablaze, and as the wind still blew with undiminished violence, it bore onward to the north a vast stream of glowing embers, some of which were so large that they seemed like charred timbers—all these swept past incessantly, and showers of sparks kept falling, and the great tide of cinders and ashes floated on for many and many a mile, till the streets of Etrurian villages received the falling dust of Rome.

Nero stood enrapt in deep admiration. A few friends were with him, chief of whom were Tigellinus and Petronius.

"It was worth coming miles to see," he exclaimed.

"It is a sight that can never be seen again,—a sight that a man may see, and then die."

With such exclamations as these he broke the silence from time to time, and stood motionless for many hours. At last he burst into tears.

"What grandeur!" he cried. "I am overcome. I feel thrills of the true sublime. You are surprised at my tears, my friends. I weep because I think that I can never again see anything equal to this."

His friends hastened to comfort him. Tigellinus assured him that he could have a fire in every city in the world, if he wished.

"Ah," said Nero, piteously, "you forget that there is only one Rome."

"Well, Rome can be burnt again."

"It would hardly do to have it too often," said Nero, with a sudden gleam of good sense.

"You are the master of Rome, and of the world," said Tigellinus; "you have only to speak and it is done."

"True," said Nero; and he fell into a fit of musing. At last he turned away.

"Come," said he, "let us go to my gardens, to the theatre, and there I will sing for you my ode on the burning of Troy. You will marvel to see how appropriate it is to this."

They descended, and mounting their horses, rode away. The Vatican gardens lay on the other side of the Tiber, and the way there led through several streets that belonged to the burnt district. Nero was in the highest spirits. He looked intently at the smoking ruins, and laughingly wondered how many inhabitants remained there. "That is a foolish saying," said he, "of that poet who says,—

" 'When I am dead, let fire devour the world.'"

For my part, I would change the line, and make it,—

“ ‘ While I’m alive, let fire devour the world.’ ”

Isn’t my improvement a good one ?”

“ The poet would certainly have written it as you suggest,” said Tigellinus, “ if he had seen this spectacle.”

Arriving at the gardens, Nero went to the theatre, put on his scenic dress, went on the stage, tuned his harp, and sang the ode which he had written. His hearers gave him the applause which true courtiers are always ready to bestow ; now listening apparently in rapt attention, now assuming an appearance of deep awe, and again, at the end of a strophe, bursting forth into irrepressible applause.

The walls of the theatre were low, and from the stage, which looked toward the direction of the city, the fire could easily be seen through the roofless top. Nero affected the manner of one who was inspired, and almost frenzied by the scene before him. Carried away by his own self-complacency, and the applause of his hearers, he sang the ode over and over again, each time growing more extravagant in his gesticulations, and only ceased when fatigue compelled him. He would have continued till morning, had not Tigellinus artfully suggested that his voice might be injured by singing in the night air, and urged him to reserve his powers, so as to sing to them again on some other day.

So, while Rome was burning, the master and ruler of Rome looked upon its agony, seeing in it only a thing for the gratification of taste, not at all a calamity that needed help and pity.

But the calamity was so terrible that at last the cries of a suffering people reached even his ears, and forced attention.

For already vast multitudes gathered in the more open places or in the distant streets—homeless and hopeless—a gaunt, ragged, desperate crowd—fierce, vindictive—looking around for some one on whom to lay the blame of all this, and

inflict vengeance. In their sudden flight they had taken little or nothing with them. All ordinary occupations were suspended, so that they could earn nothing, and starvation stared them in the face. Urged on by hunger, they had already broken open the public store-houses and helped themselves to whatever they could find. From this beginning they went on to worse excesses, and vast crowds roamed the streets, driving out families from their houses, and seizing all the provisions that were within. Universal anarchy reigned, and riot and plunder and even murder abounded. In some places bands of incendiaries went about, setting fire to houses, and driving off all who tried to prevent them, declaring that they acted by Nero's orders, and threatening death to all who interfered.

Gradually the rumour prevailed that Nero had done it all. His infamy was known to the people, and nothing was deemed too vile for him. In a short time there was hardly a man in Rome who did not believe that the fire was the act of the emperor.

There is no doubt that this desperate people would have taken vengeance on the one whom they believed to be the author of their calamities, if he had not mitigated their wrath by some well-timed acts. He had a hint of what was said about him. Among all his desires, one of his strongest was a longing for popularity. He wished the people to admire him. He cared not so much for the upper classes, but was satisfied if they only feared him. But to the people and to the soldiers he wished to be popular.

In the midst of the general distress, therefore, he came forward and made active efforts to relieve it. He threw open to the people the Field of Mars, the grounds and buildings of Agrippa, and even his own imperial gardens. The vast extent of these gave accommodation and shelter to great numbers. In addition to this, he sent to Ostia for household utensils, and tools of all kinds. The price of grain was reduced to a very

small sum, and every effort was made to relieve, in the quickest possible way, the general misfortune.

But while these efforts were being made, the fire still went on. Night came again—the fourth of these fearful nights—and the line of devastation extended itself, and spread onward, as before, and rolled steadily on in one vivid mass.

Two-thirds of the city had now perished, and men looked for the absolute and utter destruction of all the rest. There was the same feeling of helplessness and despair, yet there was this difference, that people had become accustomed to their fate, and already in those parts which had been burned on the first day there were many who busied themselves in excavating the ruins of their houses, so as to prepare for the erection of new ones.

At last men went so far as to think that something might even yet be done to save what remained. As long as houses stood, houses must burn; but if the fire should come to a place where it could encounter no houses, there it would have to stop. The remedy, then, against the fire that appeared before the minds of men, was to break down the houses that lay in its way, and thus to cut off the supply that fed it.

Gradually this idea passed from mind to mind, originating no one knew how, till the public officers saw in it a chance to do something. On the fifth day, while the fire was at its height, they began to fight against it. Large bodies of the people were assembled, and set to work at the task of demolition. All the soldiers in the city were summoned, and did the chief part of the work. The battering-ram crashed against the side of many a lofty mansion, and the soldiers, from their campaign experience, showed themselves as able to work against the houses of Rome as against the walls of beleaguered cities. A line was traced, for the purpose of arresting the flames, and on this line everything in the shape of a building was assailed.

The immense multitude that worked at this soon made their

power felt. Along the whole line thus marked out for destruction bodies of men worked with the battering-ram and the axe and the lever, levelling all things, houses and sacred fanes, and noble halls, in one common ruin. So vigorous was the work, that in about twenty-four hours it was all accomplished. They began at noon on the fifth day, and worked all night, each party being relieved by others, until noon on the sixth day.

On that sixth day the flames reached the open space, and could go no further. To the excited spectators it seemed as though this fire were a living thing, as it raged along the line of defence that man had formed against it, for it threw out its forked arms of flame, and attached itself to beams and ruined wood-work, and sought to creep among the debris of the fallen houses. But the barrier was effectual, and the Romans saw at last that some portion of the city was saved.

But safety was not yet secure. On the other side of that barrier the fire glowed, no longer casting its flames on high, but fierce, and sullen, and intense in its heat, a wrathful enemy, still menacing, and still formidable. Multitudes of men stood on guard, and as night came on the guard was more vigilantly kept, and lines of men were formed who might pass water from the nearest fountains to extinguish any sudden blaze.

The flames had been arrested at the foot of the Esquiline. On the other side stood Labeo's house, on the slope overlooking the fire. From that house the inmates had watched the conflagration through all the days and nights of its progress. Labeo had not been idle. He had assisted the unfortunate, and found shelter and food for them. He had also directed bands of workmen during the last day and night. Among those who watched on this night was Galdus, whom Labeo had sent there for that purpose ; and all the other servants of the house were there also.

Cineas had exerted himself as diligently as any one in the general calamity. He had gone about seeking after the parents

of the wandering children, with whom the streets were filled, and distributing provisions to the destitute. He had applied to Nero for permission to execute his commands, and Nero had laughingly consented, saying, that for a philosopher he could see nothing more appropriate, since it was a practical effort to attain the *summum bonum*. He had accordingly gone to Ostia, and to other neighbouring cities, and his exertions contributed not a little to the general relief. On this night he was away on his usual business.

Labeo went to bed, wearied and worn out with excessive toil. All seemed safe, and he expected sound slumbers. Helena, too, who had shared the general excitement to a painful degree, went to sleep without fear. For the first time in many days and nights, they prepared for a night's rest, and retired, not thinking what would be their awakening.

All the servants had been sent away, except one or two who remained in the house. These were as weary as any others. Marcus usually slept at a distance from his parents, and Galdus always lay in an adjoining room. Two female servants slept in the same room with Marcus.

Thus Labeo and all his household gave themselves up to deep sleep—a sleep that fatigue had made most profound, and a feeling of safety made undisturbed.

But while they slept the enemy had crept beyond the barrier; how, no one knew; where, no one could tell.

But it came—suddenly, fiercely, terribly.

In a short time the house of Labeo was all ablaze, and flamed up brightly, creating a new panic in the minds of those who had recovered in some sort from their consternation. The wide porticoes, the lofty balconies, and the long galleries, afforded a free passage to the devouring flames, which now rioted in the beginning of a new destruction.

At midnight Labeo was aroused by a shriek from his wife. He started up. Flames were all around. His first thought

was of his boy. He rushed out of the room toward the place where Marcus slept, but the flames stood before him and drove him back. The shrieks of Helena called his attention to her. She was paralyzed by fear.

Labeo seized her in his arms, and rushed down the hall in another direction, while the flames burst through the doors on either side, and at last emerged into the open air.

Helena thought only of Marcus. She called his name in piercing tones. Labeo put her down, but she rushed wildly back into the house, and stood, repelled by the flames, but still shrieking for her son.

Labeo's frenzy was equal to hers.

He looked around to see if by chance his son had escaped. There was no one to be seen. He looked toward the window of the room where his son was. The flames were all around it; another brief space and all would be over.

Yet, what could he do? The house arose before him, surrounded with lofty pillared porticoes. There was no way by which he could get to that room of his son. He caught at the pillar and tried to climb, but could do nothing. In his despair he lifted up his head and cursed the gods.

Helena came rushing out, driven back by the flames, and seeing her husband's despair, fell down senseless on the ground.

But now appeared a sight that drove Labeo to the verge of madness.

Suddenly, amid the flames that lifted up their billowy heads on the roof, in a place which was threatened but not yet touched—gliding along like a ghost, surrounded by fire which advanced on both sides—there came a fair, slender form—a boy—who advanced toward the very edge of the roof.

It was Marcus.

He stood firmly, and looked down. But the depth was too great. To descend was impossible; to leap down was death.

Then he turned around and looked at the flames.

Labeo groaned in his agony. Again and again he tried to grasp the tall pillar in his arms, and climb up, but he could do nothing.

Marcus stood and looked all around him at the flames. His face had a calm and fearless expression. He trembled not, but folded his arms and gazed steadily, and without flinching, on the face of death.

A wild wail arose from the stricken heart of that despairing father.

“Oh, my boy!”

The agony of love and despair that was uttered in this cry roused Marcus. He looked down. He saw his father. With a sad smile he waved his little arm.

“Farewell, father!”

A pang of sharper grief shot through Labeo. Was this the timid child who had shuddered in the amphitheatre? The father now understood him, and knew the meaning of that calm glance.

But all this was unendurable.

Labeo shrieked back words of love and despair. He called on his boy to throw himself down in his arms.

Marcus looked down, and then again with the same sad smile shook his head.

“Farewell, father. Weep not. We will meet again.”

And there was a strange confidence in his tone that pierced Labeo with a new sorrow.

He rushed forward; he struck madly at the stone pillars; he dashed his head against them.

But now there came the sound of footsteps, and a man darted past, swift as the wind, to where the portico terminated. Here at one end the projecting cornice ceased, and there was nothing overhanging. The man knew the place, for he stopped not to look.

It was Galdus.

Flinging his arms around the pillar, he clambered up rapidly to a great height, and then, grasping the balustrade of the balcony, he drew himself up over the place which was free from the cornice. There was yet another portico, a second story, and up this the Briton clambered as quickly and as rapidly as before.

Labeo, who had started at the sound of footsteps, had scarcely recovered his senses before he saw Galdus on the roof of the topmost portico, and close to Marcus.

His heart beat with fearful throbs. Safety for his boy seemed near, but yet what danger lay before him.

How could this Briton get down again?

Already the flames were close upon Marcus. He stood on the roof, which rose about ten feet above the top of the upper portico. Galdus called to him to leap down. The boy obeyed at once, and was caught in the arms of the Briton.

But the flames were all around. Galdus had run through them to get to the boy. He would have to run through them again to get back.

But he had made up his plan; and part of his plan was that the flames should not harm so much as a hair of that boy's head.

Standing there, he tore off his tunic, and hastily wrapped it around the boy so that it covered all his head. He then took a leathern girdle, which he usually wore about his waist, and fastened Marcus to his back. Then making him twine his arms about his neck, and bidding him hold on tightly, he prepared to return.

The flames had already overspread the place where he had just passed, though but a few moments had elapsed. But Galdus did not hesitate an instant.

He bounded into the middle of the flames. Scorched and burnt, he emerged at that angle of the portico up which he had lately clambered. In another instant he had thrown himself over, and, clinging with feet and hands, began the descent.

Another man's limbs would have been unequal to the effort; but Galdus in his forest life had been trained to climbing up trees, up precipices, and over giddy summits of ocean cliffs. His nerves were like iron, and his muscles firm. Nerve and muscle were needed to the utmost of their power, and they failed not in the trial.

Lower and lower, and nearer and nearer came Galdus, bringing the boy to that aching heart below. At last he descended the column of the lower portico; he touched the ground; he stood with his precious burden before Labeo.

Labeo spoke not a word. With trembling hands he seized the boy, and sat down and pressed him to his heart. Then there came a mighty revulsion of feeling; and, bowing his head, the stern Roman wept over his child, as though he himself were a child.

"Father," said Marcus, "I would have died like a Roman; I was not afraid."

Labeo pressed the boy closer to his heart.

But at this moment another thing aroused him.

Galdus had stood without moving, breathing heavily, and gasping for breath. The triumph that was on his face could not altogether hide the agony that he suffered. Suddenly he gave a deep groan and fell to the ground.

Marcus screamed, and, tearing himself from his father's arms, rushed to his preserver. Labeo followed, and bending over the prostrate form, he was horrified to see what appeared there.

The long hair and heavy beard of Galdus, which usually gave him such a lordly barbaric air, had been scorched off by the flames. His naked body, which he had exposed for the sake of Marcus, was burnt terribly; his arms and breast, which had endured the worst, were fiery red; and his hands were blackened and the fingers bleeding.

Marcus flung himself on the inanimate form, and wept bitterly.

“Help, father. Haste, or he will die. Oh! he is dying for my sake; my noble, dear Galdus! Have I killed you?”

Labeo looked around for help. At this moment a crowd hurried into the gates. Isaac was at their head. The aged Eubulus followed.

Labeo said hurriedly, “Let some of the men take him up and follow me.”

He then hastened to where Helena yet lay, and carrying her to a fountain, dashed water in her face. It was long before she revived. At last she came to herself, and looking up saw her husband and boy.

Clasping her arms around the child, whom she had given up for lost, she closed her eyes and breathed her thanks to Heaven.

“How have you saved him?” she cried, eagerly.

“Not now. I will tell all about it afterwards,” said Labeo. “Now we must go away. Our house is gone. We must go to the villa.”

A litter was made for Galdus, and they carried him tenderly along. Labeo carried his boy, and Helena walked by his side. Eubulus and Lydia accompanied them, for Labeo had urged them, and had promised them a home in his villa. They had slept in the furthest wing of the building, and were aroused by the glare of the flames; but as the rooms were on the lowest floor, and quite distant from the flames, they escaped without difficulty.

On the other side of the Esquiline, Labeo stopped at the house of a friend of his whom he had been intimate with in Britain, Agricola, who hurried out and eagerly received his friend. His house and grounds were filled with poor fugitives, whom he was feeding and sheltering. When he heard of Galdus, what he had done, and how he had done it, he gave orders for his careful treatment, and Isaac went off to attend him.

After a time Isaac returned, and Labeo walked out on the portico with him.

“How is Galdus?”

“Terribly scorched, but not deeply burned. He will suffer greatly for a few hours, but in two or three weeks he will be able to go about again.”

“Take care of him,” said Labeo. “Take the same care of him that you would of me. Without him what would I be now? He has saved all our lives in saving Marcus.”

“He shall have all the care that I can give,” said Isaac, gravely.

“I cannot understand it,” said Labeo. “Why should my house catch fire by itself? And how did it blaze up so soon?”

“It did not catch fire,” said Isaac, with a deep meaning.

“How, then? What do you mean?”

“I think it was set on fire.”

“Set on fire!”

“Yes.”

“Who would dare to do it? Rome is full of marauders, I know, and my house was not guarded; but still I cannot conceive how any one would dare to do such a deed.”

“There is one who would dare it.”

“Who?”

“A bitter enemy of yours.”

“What bitter enemy have I?” asked Labeo, in surprise.

“One who has sworn deep vengeance against you.”

“His name?” asked Labeo.

“Hegio.”

“Hegio!” cried Labeo, in amazement. “Would that accursed villain dare to think even of such a thing?”

“That accursed villain,” said Isaac, “hates you so bitterly that he would dare anything for vengeance.”

Labeo said nothing, but stood lost in astonishment at this intelligence. At last he asked,—

“But how do you know?”

“I did not see him set the house on fire,” said Isaac; “but

once or twice during the last two days I saw him prowling around, evidently trying to see what was going on, and bent on mischief. I would have watched him and prevented him, but I was ordered away, to guard the fire, with the rest of the household."

"Why did you not tell me this before?"

"Because I thought you would laugh at my suspicions."

"You were right—I would have done so. Even now I am slow to believe them well founded."

"He is the only man living who would have any motive."

"True," said Labeo, after a moment's thought.

"Beside this, I know that for very many months, ever since you dismissed him, he has been intent on vengeance."

"How do you know this?"

"My people," said Isaac, "know many things that are going on in the world. They mingle with various classes, and in their association with one another many things are spoken of. In making inquiries among them about Hegio, I have found out many things: that he has accused you of injustice and ill-treatment of himself; that he has openly vowed vengeance; and that during the last few months he has boasted that he had a new patron who would help him to his vengeance."

"A new patron!"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"Tigellinus."

"Tigellinus! That is what Cineas spoke of," said Labeo, musingly. "I thought nothing of it, but this appears dangerous now. Do you think, Isaac, that Tigellinus sent him to set fire to my house?"

"No," said Isaac; "on the contrary, I think that Hegio did this of his own accord."

"But how can it be proved against him? Who saw him do it?"

"No one."

"It can't be proved then."

"No."

"It is only a suspicion."

"That is all."

"Possibly the suspicion may be unfounded," said Labeo ; "but I believe you are right, and I thank you, Isaac, for your fidelity. Keep on watching, and let me know, from time to time, what you hear."

Labeo was more troubled by this intelligence than he cared to acknowledge ; but soon other things occupied his thoughts, chief among which was his removal to the villa. Cineas joined them in a day or two, and prepared to accompany them.

The last fire had not been so wide extended as was feared. The Esquiline and the neighbouring districts were thinly settled, the houses being separated by gardens, so that after raging for a day or so it died out. But many houses were nevertheless consumed, and Labeo lost all that was in his own mansion.

Sulpicia received them at the villa with eager welcome, and all were glad to get away from the painful scenes of the city. Cineas went back in a day or two, and resumed his occupation.

Eubulus and Lydia were made welcome there, and Helena, by her Christian sympathy, made them feel content to stay there for a time. There, too, Julius became a frequent visitor, and Lydia seemed to live in a new world. The villa of Labeo seemed splendid beyond description, to her eyes, and the presence of Julius threw a charm over all.

Meanwhile Galdus had slowly recovered, under the watchful care of Isaac. His most constant attendant was Marcus, as fond and as faithful as ever ; and Galdus listened with greedy ears to the loving words of the boy, to whom his heart clung with such fondness. The boy thought most of all about the devotion of Galdus, and his sufferings for his sake, and next to this he referred, with not unnatural pride, to his own behaviour.

“My father thought I was a coward, because I shuddered so to see men killed,” said he, still remembering, in his sensitiveness, the scenes of the amphitheatre; “but I am not a coward,—am I, Galdus? Did I fear death when the fire came?”

And Galdus assured him over and over again that he was the boldest of boys, and the most heroic, and was brave enough to be a Briton,—that being the highest conception of bravery which Galdus had.

In several weeks’ time the Briton had recovered, as Isaac had prophesied.

One day Labeo summoned him.

“Galdus,” said he, “I owe you more than I can ever repay. I will make a beginning toward repayment now. First of all,—you are free.”

Then, as Galdus spoke his acknowledgments, but with rather less joy than Labeo expected, he said,—

“In addition to this, I will send you to your own country.”

Galdus looked on the ground.

“When do you want to go?”

“I do not want to go.”

“What! do you not wish to return to your native country?”

“No,” said Galdus, passionately. “Why should I? All are dead,—father, mother, brothers, sisters, wife, children, all. Galdus is alone in the world. All that I love is here. Wife, and children, and father, and mother, are all alive for me in Marcus. He is more. He is my God. Do you thank me for risking my life for him?—know that I would lay down a hundred lives, and rejoice to do it. If you give me my freedom, noble master, I will take it; but if I must leave you, I will refuse it. The only liberty that I want is liberty to be near Marcus. Grant me that. It is reward enough.”

The Briton spoke this in rude, impetuous words, but the deep love that he showed for Marcus appeared in all that he said. Labeo rose, and took his hand in both his.

“Brave Briton,” said he, “you were a noble in your own country. Be free. Be my equal. Do as you choose. I am no more your master, but your friend.”

“You are the father of Marcus,” said Galdus, as his great breast heaved with emotion ; “I will be either your friend, or your slave, or both.”

And so Galdus was made free.





XXIV.

The First Persecution.

AFTER the fire, the city was rebuilt on a new plan, with wider streets, and houses of less height. Nero began to erect his Golden House, where wealth and luxury unimagined before were all accumulated.

But in the bustle and business of work the people did not forget the great calamity, nor did they readily lose the suspicion which they had formed about the author. Nero felt that this general suspicion hung like a fateful cloud impending over him ; a thunder-cloud, which might burst at any moment, and hurl him from his throne. It could not be trifled with, nor could it be forgotten as an idle care.

He sought now at all hazard to divert suspicion from himself, and looked around for those whom he might safely charge with the guilt that the world attributed to him.

His thoughts at length were directed toward the Christians. They had been gradually increasing in number for years, and although they formed but a small proportion of the population, there were yet enough to excite remark.

In this age, and through later times, it was always the fate of the Christians to be misunderstood. Often afterward it happened, in different parts of the world, that when public calamities occurred, the populace laid the blame to these innocent and unoffending people, and cruelly took vengeance for an imaginary offence. And now there occurred the first and

most conspicuous example of unmerited suffering endured by these men.

Certain things in the life and manners of the Christians excited suspicion in the mind of a superstitious populace. Their language and phraseology were misinterpreted. They spoke of Christ as their king ; of a kingdom that was not of this world ; and this the ignorant multitude took as a sort of treason against the emperor. They met in secret assemblies, where it was reported that they indulged in the worst vices among themselves. The mysterious repast which they celebrated in memory of their dying Lord was particularly suspected. A report prevailed that at this repast they fed on human flesh and drank human blood,—a strange perversion of that symbolical rite which represented by bread and wine the body and blood of the Saviour. When Carbo inveighed against the Christians, he only repeated the popular opinion. They came from Syria, or rather their religion came from that quarter, and as Syria was the well-known source of all the worst vices and most abject superstitions of the time, it is, perhaps, not wonderful that the Roman was led to suspect Christianity of being like the Syrian religions of which he had heard and seen so much.

Under these circumstances Nero determined to sacrifice these innocent but suspected men to the popular fury. His agents went everywhere whispering charges against them, and filling the public mind with ideas of their guilt. The feeling grew stronger and stronger ; the name of Christian became abhorrent : and some of those who were known to belong to that faith were mobbed in the streets by the furious populace.

The little flock saw the storm coming, and trembled. They knew that something terrible impended, and took counsel together as to the best way in which to meet it. But no way appeared, and so they made up their minds to meet the worst, whatever it might be. Some of those who had known a larger experience, exhorted the younger members to be firm, and, even

if death should come, to give up their lives boldly for him who gave his life for them.

At last the storm burst. The emperor's proclamation appeared, in which a direct charge was made against them that they had burned the city; and orders were issued for the arrest of all who worshipped Christ. Many people were shocked at this undeserved accusation. The more intelligent believed that it was a trick of Nero's to keep suspicion from himself, and looked upon it as but one of his many atrocities; but the larger number of the unthinking people accepted the charge as a fact, and clamoured for the blood of the Christians as eagerly as the Jews once clamoured for that of Christ.

The Christians waited for the first blow, and did not have to wait long. A descent was made by the officials of the government upon four of their assemblies at the same time, and all without exception were carried off and thrown into prison to await their doom.

A mockery of a trial was then begun. A set of abandoned wretches came forward at the instigation of the emperor, confessed themselves Christians, swore to all the abominable crimes which were usually attributed to these, and affirmed that they and the rest of the Christians had set fire to the city, and afterwards had kept it going.

Upon the strength of this, the Christians were condemned to die. An offer was made that those of the women who abjured their faith might be spared, but none were found who accepted this.

A terrific punishment was then prepared for them. It owed its origin to the ingenuity of the emperor, who said that they who had caused the death of so many by fire, ought themselves to perish in the same way, for then only would the penalty be commensurate with the crime. He determined, while punishing the Christians, to amuse the populace also, and turn the scene of execution into a great public spectacle. The

sight of their sufferings would convince the unthinking spectators of their guilt ; and the novel circumstances of the scene would have a mixture of grandeur and horror that would make him popular with the common people.

The place selected for their punishment was the Imperial Gardens on the Vatican Hill, on the other side of the river ; the same place where Nero had sung while Rome was burning.

The scene was worthy of Nero. Hundreds of stakes were driven into the ground at certain intervals along the avenues and walks. To each of these a Christian was bound firmly with chains. Each unhappy victim was wrapped from head to foot in a thick garment, formed of coarse cloth in various layers, saturated with pitch. Fagots were heaped around their feet.

The unhappy ones awaited their doom with different feelings. In some there might be seen the triumph of Christian faith ; but in many, weak human nature was evident. Of these, some were stupified with horror ; others implored mercy from the emperor, from the guards, and from the populace. Yet it deserves to be noted, that among all these not one offered to abjure the Christian faith.

Here were people of both sexes and of all ages involved in the common suffering. Old men were there, whose venerable faces and reverend locks, and long white beards defiled by pitch, gave additional horror to a horrid scene. Young maidens were there, innocent and pure, guilty of no crime, and their pale, fearful faces might have excited pity in any population less hardened than that of Rome. There was none to save them. So all alike, young and old, cast their thoughts to Him who was able to save.

On this evening, the time of the first punishment, Nero was in high spirits. He congratulated himself on his own ingenuity in thus devising a plan of punishment that was at once commensurate with the crime of the convicted, and at the same time would give a new sensation to the Romans, who so loved

novelty. He had arranged that the people should be admitted, and then, at a given signal, the torches should be applied.

Nero had often thrown open his gardens to the people, but never under such circumstances as these. He had torches provided of a novel description. The illumination which he had provided for the scene was the burning victims of his hellish cruelty.

Dressed as a charioteer, the emperor drove round and round the winding walks, exhibiting his skill to the crowd, and enjoying their applause. He continued this till darkness came, and his fine performances could no longer be appreciated.

Vast numbers came. Curiosity attracted most ; others came from a sort of cruel desire to see suffering under the immediate management of one who was skilled in inflicting it. The gardens were thronged by the populace of Rome,—men, women, and children. They stood gazing with a kind of awful expectation upon the forms of the victims fixed at their several stakes, and awaiting the signal which should announce their doom.

At last the signal was given.

At once, to hundreds of piles of fagots, heaped around hundreds of stakes, the torches were applied, and the flames rushed quickly over the resinous wood, and up the pitchy garments of the victims at the stake. A wild red light illuminated the frightful scene. The gardens glowed luridly with this terrific illumination, and the glare rose up high in the air, till those who had remained in the city looked across the Tiber, and saw with awful feelings the signs of this dread punishment.

The air was filled with shrieks of pain and cries of agony from the unhappy ones at the stake, thus dying amid excruciating torments. The spectators were horror-stricken. Cold-blooded though they were, and accustomed to scenes of cruelty in the amphitheatre, they nevertheless saw here something which exceeded the worst horrors of Roman sports. It filled them with dismay. It sickened them. The shrieks of anguish

thrilled through the hearts of all. The spectators were not amused, they were shocked and sickened.

But Nero, in his self-complacency, measuring all men by himself, and judging of the feelings of all others by his own, was quite unconscious of the real effect of his illumination. As the light flashed up from the burning piles, he mounted his chariot once more, and resumed his career through the paths of the garden, dashing furiously along ; now stopping his horses in an instant, now turning them sharply to the right, now to the left. But no applause came now to his ears. The emperor, however, thought nothing of this ; he supposed either that the people were too delighted with the spectacle to attend to his charioteering, or else that their admiration deprived them of the power of utterance.

But the people were filled with dismay. All those who had any humanity left, felt sympathy with the sufferers, and regarded Nero as the vilest of tyrants. They stood with throbbing hearts looking at the agony before them, till the cries of pain grew feebler, and successively the sufferers passed away from suffering.

At last all grew dark ; the flames ceased ; only a lurid fire glowed where the martyrs had perished ; and then in the darkness, with low murmurs, the vast crowd departed to their several homes.

Nero's plan was not altogether successful.

The Christians were no longer mobbed in the streets. The people felt sorrow for their fate.

But the persecution continued. Every day new victims were seized. Some were nailed on the cross ; others were sewed up in the skins of wild beasts, and torn to pieces by fierce hounds ; others were exposed to the beasts of the amphitheatre ; and others were tortured in many ways.

But many of the more intelligent felt deeply for the Christians in their suffering. They thought that they indulged in

pernicious practices ; but they saw that they fell a sacrifice not to the public good, but to the cruelty of one man only. Still nothing could be done. The emperor was absolute master, and even if the people shuddered at his cruelty, they dared not interpose.

The little community of Christians was sadly broken up. Many fled to distant parts. Others concealed themselves in the neighbourhood of the city. Others, who could not leave, calmly waited death.

The general affliction rested on none more heavily than on those in Labeo's villa who loved Christ. Helena was a Christian, and did not know at what time even she might be called on to choose between abjuring Christ and death. Others there felt that they were in greater danger. Helena might escape. She was the wife of Labeo, and his influence could shield her from harm. But for Eubulus, if he were captured, there could be no escape. He was known as one of the chief Christians of the place. He himself feared nothing at all. He heard the news of the persecution without trepidation. He had fears for others, but no fear for himself. He was ready for any fate.

But others had fears for him when he had no fear for himself. Julius, although himself in great danger, determined to save the venerable man. Cineas was eager to assist.

There was no place of escape. Flight from the vengeance of the government was not possible. The arms of that government extended over the civilized world ; there were no foreign states to which a man might flee. Parthia, the savages of Africa, and the wild tribes of Germany,—these were the only alternative to the Roman world, and flight to these barbaric nations was not to be thought of.

In that time of despair there appeared to Julius and to the rest of the Christians one place, at once easy of access and impenetrable to pursuit, already hallowed by Christian associations, where the Christian might appropriately seek refuge, and

find himself in the midst of the remains of those who had gone on before. This place was the catacombs.

Excavations had been made there already to a great extent. Few knew the number of the passages, or the direction in which they led. All the passages were cut through a sort of stone which remained firm, and grew stronger with age, although soft when first cut. The numerous passages formed a labyrinth, in which pursuit became impossible. Whether it was an anticipation of such a time as this, leading the Christians to regard this as a place of retreat in danger, or, as is more probable, the mere instinct of safety drawing them here, cannot be known, nor does it matter; certain it is, that at the first cruel outbreak of the persecution great numbers fled here for safety, and took up their abode in these gloomy vaults.

It was to this place that Julius determined to take Eubulus. At first the old man positively refused, being eager, as he said, to die for his Saviour; but Julius worked upon him through his love for his daughter, and thus induced him to go there. Lydia might perhaps have remained in safety in Labeo's house, under the protection of Helena; but she refused to think of separation from her father. Whatever his fate might be, she determined to share it, and chose rather to live in these subterranean vaults, amid the mouldering remains of the dead, than purchase comfort by allowing the aged man to go there alone.

Here, then, Eubulus and Lydia sought refuge, and Julius accompanied them. He was in the greatest danger. His name had been struck off the military list, and he had been publicly proclaimed as a traitor and an outlaw. But he showed neither regret nor irresolution. His faith and his conscience sustained him, and beside this, even in these dim caverns the light of existence could not altogether fade, for to him the darkness was brightened by the presence of Lydia.

Very many had found refuge here. Far beneath the streets

of that city there lived another life, whose existence was but little suspected by the population above. At first men only came, but after a time, when it was found that women were as readily seized and put to death as men, then they fled here also. Whenever it was possible, they left all the younger children behind in the charge of others; but often this was not possible, and there were many little children in these dismal vaults, shut out from that light of day which to their tender years is so great a necessity. Mothers were here, too, with little infants, which they had still to carry about in their arms.

Sadness reigned on all faces, but there was universal patience. None complained. All along they had been expecting some such fate as this. Besides, their lot at first seemed far better than that of those who had perished on the cross or by fire. At first it seemed so; but as time passed, and the gloom deepened around them, this living burial seemed worse than death. Then many left their concealment, partly from despair, partly from a noble spirit of self-sacrifice; for sustenance was difficult to procure, and those who left thought that life would be easier to those who remained.

The little children felt the influence of this sombre and gloomy life most quickly and most fatally. Many sickened at once, and died in their parents' arms. Others lived, wasted to skeletons, with a life that hovered on the verge of death. Often the parents of these hapless innocents ventured forth, daring all dangers for the sake of their children. Some went back to the city, to their old abodes; others tried to go away to distant places, where they hoped to be more secure; but among these fugitives many were discovered, tried, and put to death, and thus there seemed to be a constant supply of victims.

Thus there were deep sadness and melancholy through all this gloomy place. Sometimes the words of the gospel, communicated to them by their leaders, would diffuse a momentary relief, and would even fill them with something like exultation.

But these feelings were only transitory; no joy or content could endure in so frightful a place; the gloom affected the physical constitution, and thus acted upon the mind also.

The common attitude of these Christian fugitives was one of patient resignation. They lost all hope in this life, and looked eagerly to the next one. They reflected that Christ had foretold that sorrow would be the lot of his followers; and in that sorrow they could only bow their heads, and meekly acquiesce in his will.

Yet in that sad, mourning crowd, there was one who seemed to know nothing either of sadness or mournfulness. This was the venerable Eubulus.

A change came over him in this place. Before this he had been a meditative and reserved man, perpetually fearful of sin, and despondent about his faith. But this new life brought its changes, and Eubulus seemed to feel that with him it was not enough to shut himself up with his own thoughts.

But Eubulus had known in the past a memorable experience, which it is not necessary to rehearse here, yet it was one which could afford hope to others, and the recollection of which could give comfort to his own soul. Buried here amid this gloom, his usual introspective habits departed, and his despondency also. He seemed anxious to devote himself to the task of encouraging those around him, and in his firm faith others found peace. What was it that so changed him? Was it the effort of the immortal spirit, with a premonition of its departure, to pass its last time on earth in most effectually serving its Lord?

Many of the Christians went up into the city for food, choosing the night rather than the day. Of these a large number never returned. But their fate did not deter others. There were many in the city who sympathized with them, and assisted them, sometimes at the hazard of their lives.

But the most active friend whom they had was Cineas. His

vast wealth enabled him to employ a large number of men to convey provisions to the neighbourhood. As he was also known to have some kind of a public commission for the comfort of the people, he was never suspected. He was thus able to do much for the fugitives, with whom he felt so deep a sympathy. Very often he went down himself, and tried to cheer them; but he soon saw that no human words could bring comfort to hearts like these. Still, his face and his form became well known to all here, and they knew, too, that he was not one of themselves; they gradually learned all about him, and many and many a prayer went up for this generous friend. If the consciousness of doing good can bring happiness, then Cineas at this time must have known the greatest happiness of his life. His arrival was the signal for eager welcome from sincere and grateful hearts. Men looked on him with reverential affection, and as he moved along, all around him invoked the richest blessings of Heaven on his head.

Sometimes, under the protection of Julius, Lydia visited the upper air, and was able to inhale the pure atmosphere, and gain strength to support her in her subterranean life. No one tried any longer to induce her to leave this place, for she had no thought of leaving her father.

Among those who went up most frequently was Julius. He went up indifferently by night or by day. Daring to the verge of rashness, fertile in resource, and quick in expedients, he had encountered many perils, and had often been on the very verge of capture, but he had managed thus far to escape. His friends trembled for his safety, but could not prevent his adventurous spirit from taking the chief part in the perils of the upper world.

But Eubulus had not a long captivity. The close atmosphere, the chill, damp air, and the darkness, all served to weaken his strength. Day after day he grew weaker. They besought him to return to Labeo's villa, but he refused.

"No," said he. "Once I would have gladly stayed there and met my fate, but now I will give the remainder of my life to these sorrowing ones around me. I feel that they receive comfort from my words."

So the old man continued his fond employ, and as long as he could speak, those gloomy caverns seemed not altogether dark.

But at last his voice ceased for ever.

He passed away in the night. It was Lydia who first discovered the dread truth. She found her father, one morning, lying still and cold on his couch. Her cries brought all around to the spot. There they saw the body of the old man, from which the freed spirit had taken its everlasting flight.

There was gloom enough after that. They missed his venerable form, his majestic countenance; but, most of all, they missed his words, that never ceased to carry with them hope, and peace, and divine consolation. What could supply the place?

As for Lydia, when the old man was buried, Cineas insisted that she should go and live with Helena. In her grief and loneliness she had no will of her own, and mechanically yielded to the suggestion. Helena received her as a sister.

Dark and gloomy enough was the place to Julius then. But he continued to labour as before for the common good, and the only difference that these things made in his outward actions was, that he became even more rash, more daring, and more careless of his own life than ever. Yet it seemed as though Heaven watched over him. He encountered perils every day, yet managed to elude all danger.

Cineas laboured all the more zealously for these afflicted ones, as he saw their imprisonment prolonged and their sorrow deepen. Much he marvelled at that resolution which was maintained under such circumstances, and at that faith which lay beneath all that resolution. He thought he himself would

make but a poor Christian, for he did not feel as though he could endure all this for any belief whatever. He thought that he could die for conscience' sake, but this life seemed like a lingering death, more terrible than any which was encountered on the cross or at the stake.

In their sorrow they sought expression for all their feelings in those psalms which they loved to sing—the psalms of the Jews, which the Christians had also adopted, and to which they had given a new meaning:—

“ O Lord God of my salvation,
 I have cried day and night before thee ;
 Let my prayer come before thee ;
 Incline thine ear unto my cry ;
 For my soul is full of troubles
 And my life draweth nigh unto the grave.
 I am counted with them that go down into the pit ;
 I am as a man that hath no strength ;
 Free among the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave,
 Whom thou rememberest no more,
 And they are cut off from thy hand.
 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit,
 In darkness, in the deeps ;
 Thy wrath lies hard upon me,
 And thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves.”

Here despair seemed to find utterance. These men took all these words to themselves, and saw in them something prophetic. While they strove to attain to resignation and patience, they yet felt themselves forced to speak forth their sorrow in words; and when those words might be found in the inspired volume, there they adopted them, and used them. Among these there was another psalm, which often was heard here at this time:—

“ Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord !
 Lord, hear my voice ;
 Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.
 If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities,
 O Lord ! who shall stand ?
 But there is forgiveness with thee,
 That thou mayest be feared.
 I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait,

And in his word do I hope ;
 My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning,
 I say more than they that watch for the morning.
 Let Israel hope in the Lord ;
 For with the Lord there is mercy,
 And with him is plenteous redemption,
 And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities."

With these psalms of the Jewish Church there mingled the Christian hymns. Rude in structure, and formed from the rhyming popular models, the taste formed by the culture of that age might be offended, but if the harmony of sound was wanting, the soul could see deep meaning in the words, and receive comfort:—

" Though through the vale I go
 Oppressed and terrified,
 In darkness and alone,
 With fear on every side,
 Yet soars my spirit up
 From pangs of death to sing :
 ' O Grave ! where is thy victory ?
 O Death ! where is thy sting ?'

" In deep grief and in dark,
 With fear on every side,
 I know in whom I trust,
 I know the Crucified,
 He lifts my spirit up
 From pangs of death to sing :
 ' O Grave ! where is thy victory ?
 O Death ! where is thy sting ?'





The Conspiracy.



HUS for many and many a weary month life was only safe to the Christian by the sacrifice of that light of day, without which life is worth but little.

Cineas went near the Court but seldom. His duties in behalf of the public and the poor, who yet remained, to a great extent, homeless and destitute, formed a sort of an excuse. The idea of again associating with Nero filled him with horror. To him he attributed all the hideous scenes which he had lately witnessed,—the fire; the grief and the destruction of the people; the cruel punishment of the Christians; their life and sufferings below the ground. He seemed to Cineas now like the enemy of the human race,—Dis himself, incarnate, sent to inflict agony and woe on the people. On that monarch and his Court he looked with loathing, and he felt that he would risk every danger rather than resume his former life there.

To one so jealous as Nero, this action of Cineas would have caused jealousy and suspicion, under ordinary circumstances, and these would have certainly resulted in characteristic vengeance. But the fact was, Nero had forgotten all about him. The scenes of the last few months had thrown him out of his literary tastes completely. He was just now intent above all things on the destruction of the Christians. The fact that they were innocent only gave zest to the occupation. As to their

particular belief, he was supremely indifferent. Their flight to mysterious hiding-places, where they baffled him so completely, filled him with greater animosity, and made him only the more eager to complete their destruction.

But now an event occurred which turned the thoughts of Nero in a new direction, and lessened his vindictiveness against the Christians, by showing him a new class of enemies, who were more terrible by far.

The atrocities of Nero had filled the public mind with horror, and some courageous men thought that they might find a way to rid the world of such a monster. A conspiracy was formed, which embraced many men of the highest rank and influence in the state. They saw that the empire was going to ruin, and sought, while getting rid of Nero, to find some one who was capable of remedying the evil. This man some thought they saw in Seneca; but others, and the majority, preferred Caius Piso, who was descended from the house of Calpurnius, and related to the best families of Rome. He had an amiable character; and his affable and courteous manners made him popular among his friends. He was not particularly rigid in his morals; but this, to the conspirators, was no disadvantage. The conspiracy was carried on with such spirit that it was scarcely begun when it was almost ripe for execution. Senators, knights, soldiers, and even women, joined it with enthusiasm, all being animated by their common hatred of Nero.

The day had been fixed, and all things arranged, even down to the minutest details: the one who should give the first stroke was appointed; but suddenly, through the carelessness of one of the chief conspirators, all was lost. The freedman of one of the leaders found it out, and made it known. Instantly a number were arrested and put to the torture. Their confession served to implicate others. More were seized, and served in the same way. All was disclosed. The confession of one involved the confession of all. The rack subdued their resolu-

tion. The poet Lucan lost his fortitude under torture, and charged his own mother with the guilt of being accessory to the plot.

Then began the work of vengeance. All who in any way, real or imaginary, were supposed to be connected with the conspiracy were seized and put to death. Some of these were actually guilty. Against others nothing could be proved. The most eminent of the sufferers was the illustrious Seneca. This man, with all his faults, and they were not few, was the most conspicuous in the age, and his death, inflicted without just cause, has given additional lustre to his name.

When the message of death was brought to Seneca, he heard it with calm composure. He was not allowed to make his will; so he told his friends that, although he was deprived of the power of requiting their services with the last marks of his esteem, yet he could leave them the example of his life, which they could cherish in their memories. Seeing them burst into tears, he said, "Where are the precepts of philosophy which for years have taught us to meet the calamities of life with firmness? Was the cruelty of Nero unknown to any of us? He murdered his mother; he destroyed his brother; and after those horrible acts, what remains but to complete his crimes by the murder of his tutor?"

Then he turned his attention to his wife, and embracing her, for a moment yielded to his emotions. Then, recovering himself, he entreated her to mitigate her grief. But his wife was inconsolable, and determined to die with her husband. Seneca thought that her resolution was a generous one, and ought not to be resisted. "Since you will have it so," said he, "we will die together. We will leave an example of equal constancy, but you will have the chief glory."

Then their veins were opened. Seneca was old, and his blood did not flow freely. He ordered additional veins to be opened. Then his sufferings began to overpower him, and

fearing that the sight of his anguish might distress his wife, he persuaded her to be taken to another room. Then he calmly called for his secretary and dictated a farewell discourse, which was published after his death.

His wife, however, was not suffered to die. Nero feared that this additional victim would injure him in the estimation of the people, and by his orders her veins were bound up, and she was saved. She was already in a state of insensibility, and awaked to a life to which she had been recalled involuntarily.

While his wife was thus saved, Seneca lingered in agony. Finding his death prolonged, he called for some poison, which was given to him. But the effect was scarcely perceptible. He longed to get rid of life. He wished also to show what contempt of death might be created by philosophy. So, when he found that the poison had an insufficient effect, he requested to be placed in a warm bath. Being placed there, he sprinkled his slaves with water, and said, "I make libation to Jupiter, the deliverer." Then the vapour overpowered him, and death soon came. So died Seneca, a man with many faults, but who showed himself, at least, fearless of death, and maintained his calmness till the end.

The next one in eminence who was sacrificed to the vengeance of Nero, was Lucan, the famous poet. Of his guilt and complicity in the conspiracy there was no doubt. His veins were opened, and the blood flowed freely from him. The extremities of his limbs lost their strength and vital heat first, and the warmth retreated to his heart; but he retained the vigour of his mind until the last. Then there occurred to his memory the lines in his *Pharsalia*, which describe a soldier dying in the same condition. These he repeated, and while uttering them he breathed his last.

Engaged in such a work as this, it is not wonderful that Nero forgot for a time the milder charms of art and literature. Vengeance took up all his thoughts. The death of Seneca

gave him peculiar delight, for the venerable character of the man, and his lofty fame, made that death in the highest degree striking. Nero also was delighted at the circumstances which accompanied it. He vowed that it was a scene of the highest dramatic effect, and ought to be represented on the stage. He regarded the devotion of his wife as something admirable, and felt sorry that he had interfered. He felt that he had irretrievably spoiled a grand tragic scene worthy of Sophocles. He declared that on another occasion of the kind he would risk anything rather than spoil such an affecting display of true tragic pathos.

As to Lucan, he felt very much in the same way. The death of that poet gave him pleasure, because Lucan had entered into rivalry with him, and had been successful, on which account Nero had never ceased to be mortally jealous of him. With him jealousy meant vengeance, and now that vengeance was satiated. Yet so singular was the nature of this man, that when Lucan's death was described, he was affected to tears. He declared that he never believed that Lucan had such fine taste. To die with such an appropriate quotation on one's lips was admirable. He only objected that Lucan had quoted his own poetry, and thought of some of his own compositions which would have been more effective under the circumstances.

Cineas and Labeo were therefore quite forgotten, and indeed Nero felt a sort of relief at the absence of Cineas; for if he had been present, he would have felt half ashamed of his loss of interest in literature and philosophy. The conspiracy filled all his thoughts. Fortunate it was for Cineas that he had never associated to any extent with the chief men in Rome. It saved him now. For now all men were suspected, yet no one dreamed of laying anything to the charge of Cineas; for it was well known that he had never mixed with Roman society, and that, although to some extent a courtier, he had confined all his attentions to Nero. The fact was, that Roman society was

always distasteful. The virtuous were too harsh and severe, and the vicious were too debased. There were good men in Rome whom he admired sincerely, but he cared nothing for their society. His Greek nature desired something more genial, more playful, and less austere than the Roman of the virtuous class. His wide attainments in philosophy were also altogether Greek, he knew little of Latin literature, and cared less; in the object of his life he found nothing there which could excite any interest, and he cared more for the simple writings of the Christians than for all the works of Cicero. All this had kept Cineas away from the leading men of Rome. Burrhus, Nero, and Labeo, were all with whom he had associated; and even Tigellinus, if he had wished to make a charge against him by means of his false witnesses, could have invented no coherent plot.

Nero had so completely forgotten Cineas and Labeo, that in the course of promotion to higher offices the latter was overlooked, and a friend of Tigellinus was put in the very place to which he confidently expected to be advanced. Remonstrance was of course useless, even if it had been possible for him to condescend to it. He was compelled to bear his disappointment as best he could. That disappointment was indeed severe. It filled his mind with gloom. He had thought that his future was secure, and in the ordinary routine had looked forward in a short time to a high position in some province from which he might rise to be governor. But now this interruption in his advance broke up all those bright prospects. He saw plainly, that if in the very fulness of his prosperity such a blow could fall, that now, in his adversity, no change for the better could reasonably be expected.

In his disappointment he had no other present resource but to return to his villa, and wait for something better. Perhaps he might yet get promotion in the army; perhaps, after a while, some better prospect might arise. So severe had been the blow to his ambitious projects, that he thought of nothing but

his own affairs. The recent calamities shocked him, but inspired his mind with none of that horror which Cineas felt. He contented himself with saying nothing. He did not feel called on to interfere in one way or another. If his promotion had gone on, he would have been willing to remain in connection with the Court, even if Nero had entered upon worse crimes than ever. It would have sufficiently satisfied his conscience if he had kept clear of actual guilt.

As time went on, and he found himself still without occupation, he constantly suspected that some enemy had interfered with his prospects, and his mind could not help turning to Tigellinus and Hegio. That the latter had set fire to his house he firmly believed, and did not know how far he might have influence with his new master. Under these circumstances, he thought that the best thing would be to keep on his guard against any new misfortunes from the same source. In his conferences with Isaac, he found that Hegio had become one of the most active attendants on Tigellinus, and was rapidly increasing in wealth and in importance. He felt that Hegio might yet cherish thoughts of vengeance, and that this should be guarded against. For this purpose he could think of no one better than Galdus.

"Galdus," said he one day, when he had sent for the Briton, "you are not my servant now, but my friend. Are you not?"

"You have called me so," said the Briton, with dignity, "and I only wait for an opportunity to prove myself worthy of the name."

"I have not forgotten your heroic act. Do you know who caused that—who set the house on fire, and almost destroyed my son?"

"No," said Galdus, with a wild fire in his eyes; "who?"

"He is my worst enemy. He was once my servant, but I dismissed him for dishonesty. He seeks to take vengeance on me for this."

“He shall die!” cried Galdus, with the look of a savage.

“No, no ; you are in a civilized land, not in Britain. It is not so easy to kill men in Rome. I wish you to watch out for this man. He is an Asiatic, with brown skin, black curling hair, black eyes, and the face of a villain. His name is Hegio. Watch out for him. If you ever see him on these grounds, do what you like with him. If you ever see him in this neighbourhood, let me know. He is still trying to injure me, and I believe that he has recently done me a great wrong. He may yet do worse.”

“If he does, he dies,” said Galdus, slowly and solemnly.





XXVI.

The Arrest.



ONE day Labeo received a visit from one whom he had not seen for a long time.

It was Julius.

Pale, emaciated, and haggard, he looked but little like that stout young soldier who formerly had been here. Cineas had seen him constantly ever since his new life, but Labeo had not. There was anxiety in his face, which struck Cineas at once and excited his apprehensions.

"There is bad news?" said Cineas, inquiringly, after the first salutations were over.

"There is," said Julius, gloomily, "or else I would not have entered the house of a public officer."

"That I am no longer," said Labeo.

"True," said Julius, sadly, regarding him for a moment. Then, with a hurried movement,—*"There's no time to lose—I bring fearful news to you."*

"What?"

"Labeo, your wife is a Christian."

Labeo and Cineas turned as pale as ashes, and looked at each other, while a feeling of sickening horror thrilled through them. The fact that Helena was a Christian was of course well enough known to both, but in these fearful times of persecution and proscription, the hurried visit of this outlaw, with these words on his lips, had a fearful meaning.

"Well?" said Labeo, in a voice which was scarce audible.

"They are going to arrest her," said Julius.

"Arrest her!"

"Yes. And there is no time to lose. She must fly."

"Fly!—where?"

"To the catacombs."

"To the catacombs!—to a living tomb! And why?" cried Labeo, passionately. "Who would dare to arrest her? She is not a common woman of the mob. She is not a thing for informers and perjured witnesses to practise on. Let them try it if they dare."

"There is no time to lose," cried Julius, interrupting him, "not a moment. I came out to save them, and to save also Lydia. They must fly—with me—at once—or they are lost!"

"Fly!—like criminals! Fly!—my wife!—never," cried Labeo, vehemently. "Never. There is no such thing as this yet. I have not fallen so low. While I live she shall live. She shall not go there—no—never."

"Think of Nero, and you will see that no cruelty is impossible for him."

"Nero has no cause for hating me. He has favoured me greatly until recently."

"Others have supplanted you," said Julius, impatiently. "You can do nothing. But I lose time. Haste. If you wish the safety of your wife, bid her prepare; if not, then at least summon Lydia."

Cineas said not a word. Labeo was the judge here. He knew not what to say, and said nothing. The suddenness of the blow bewildered him.

Then Julius implored Labeo to save his wife; to send her away, or convey her away; to do anything rather than allow her to remain. And Labeo steadily refused. He was still unable to understand how any one would dare to arrest her. All his pride was roused. Never would he consent to that

which seemed so deep a disgrace. For it seemed to him like additional insult to his present adverse fortunes, and he fought against it, and determined to hold out against fate.

Julius, therefore, finding all his representations useless, in his deep anxiety, and in his haste, urged that Lydia might be summoned. This Labeo readily granted. The young maiden was informed of the state of the case, and Helena, who heard the news with the most gloomy forebodings, not unmingled with terror, hurried her away, and took leave of her as though this were their last meeting on earth. Scarcely did Julius allow a word, but in his hurry at once set out. The horse which had carried him out carried both back towards their destination.

Then the two friends were left to their thoughts. Soon Helena appeared, pale and frightened. She flung herself into her husband's arms. He folded her in them, and held her close to his heart, and looked with a fierce glance away, as though in search of some imaginary enemy.

"There's no danger," said he, "and no fear, sweet wife. Who would dare to arrest you?"

Helena shuddered, and wept.

"I am such a coward," she said, "I cannot face danger."

"Danger! No; you are too tender even to be exposed to the fear of it. And never shall harm come to you while I live."

"Had I not better fly?" she asked, timidly.

"Fly! Alas, where? What place is secure from Cæsar? But why talk of flight? There is no cause. This is a needless alarm. There may, indeed, have been danger for Lydia, but there is none for you. I have some power yet, and influence. I am not a fallen man altogether. The Sulpicii are not so mean that they have become poor victims of a tyrant. No, no. Calm yourself, dearest. Look up—my own—the danger is only a fancy. It was a mistake of Julius—a mistake—that's all."

With such words Labeo strove to calm his wife, yet, with all his indignant disbelief, his heart was ill at ease. His mind misgave him. For Christians of name and station had already suffered the most cruel of deaths, and it was possible that Helena might be arrested after all.

While Labeo tried to give to Helena a confidence which he himself did not possess, Cineas sat, pale and anxious, looking at the floor. Well he knew the danger. He had anticipated some such thing as this, and he seemed to see the actual presence of that which he feared.

Now, while these three were thus together struggling with fear and anxiety, they became aware of a sudden tumult outside—the tramp of horses, the rattle of arms. Helena heard it first. She shrieked, and clung more closely to her husband.

“O my God!” she cried, “support me. I cannot support myself.”

Labeo held her and looked wildly at the door. The sounds came nearer. There were voices at the portico, footsteps on the pavement, and, without any summons or message, the footsteps drew nearer.

An officer entered the room, followed by several soldiers. One man accompanied them whose appearance filled Labeo with bitterest rage. It was Hegio.

He had come to triumph in his revenge. Labeo knew it. And that revenge was wreaked through his wife. His brain reeled in his furious passion.

The officer respectfully saluted Labeo, and apologized for his presence. He hoped that he might be forgiven for performing a painful duty, and after some long preamble of this sort, he at length told the nature of his errand. He had been sent to arrest Helena, the wife of Labeo, as a Christian, and a traitor to the state. Saying this, he displayed the imperial mandate.

Labeo looked at it for a moment, and then at the officer.

"This is some cruel jest of the emperor," said he at last in a hoarse voice.

"I hope it is a jest," said the officer; "but I have only one course."

"Do you mean to say that you will arrest her?" said Labeo, holding his wife more closely as she clung to him in her fright.

"What else can I do?" said the officer, in an embarrassed manner. "You know I have nothing to do but to obey orders. I must make the arrest."

"Never!" cried Labeo, furiously.

"What?"

"Never!"

"You need not talk in that way," said the officer, trying to find some escape from the painfulness of the scene by assuming an air of anger. "You must yield. The emperor commands you."

"I will not, and you may tell him so."

"Then I must take her," said the officer.

"Do so at your peril."

"It will be at your peril," retorted the other, whose wrath began to be excited. "Why do you interfere with me? It is my duty. She can swear that she is not a Christian, and all will be well. That is all that she has to do."

At this Helena trembled all the more violently. The eyes of Hegio sparkled. He came up to the officer and said in a low voice,—

"You have said nothing about the boy."

"The boy."

Labeo repeated the words mechanically, and a worse horror stole through him.

The officer looked fiercely at Hegio.

"Who asked for your interference?" he cried. "Must you remind me of what I would like to forget?" Then turning to

Labeo, "There is another," said he, slowly and painfully—"a boy; I must take him too."

Helena heard this. With a shriek she tore herself away, and rushed out of the room. No one followed her. Labeo placed himself in the doorway, and glared at the soldiers like a madman.

"Seize him!" said the officer. "Let two of you hold him, and the rest follow me. I must put an end to this."

Two soldiers rushed at Labeo, and seizing him, each one held an arm, and dragged him away, while the rest, headed by Hegio, went in after Helena.

Meanwhile the disturbance and the shrieks of Helena had roused all, and the servants came flocking round, pale and trembling. Among them came Galdus, who, ever faithful, and occupied by one engrossing affection, ran first to the chamber of Marcus. There he saw Helena, frantic, and clasping her son in her arms.

"Save him! Oh, save him!" she cried, when she saw Galdus. "The soldiers are here. They are going to arrest him."

At this moment the tramp of men resounded over the marble pavement, and as Galdus turned he saw them advance, headed by Hegio. He stood like a lion at bay. His gigantic form filled the doorway. But he was unarmed, and the spears of the soldiers were pointed toward him.

"Out of the way there," cried the officer.

For a moment Galdus hesitated. The soldiers advanced. He could do nothing, and with a sigh that seemed to rend his frame, he fell back before them. There he stood with folded arms, looking on the scene. He marked the face of Hegio; he recognized him as the man for whom he had been bidden to watch; he noticed the scowl and the triumph that were on that face.

Short time was needed to complete this work. Helena was

taken, and, half-fainting in her fear, with her boy clinging to her, she moved out among the soldiers. Marcus looked frightened and bewildered, understanding nothing, and only knowing that something terrible had occurred.

So they returned to the hall.

The officer turned to Labeo.

"Be of good courage," said he in a faltering voice. "There need be no fear. She will swear that she is not a Christian. She will come back."

Labeo said not a word. He stood, held between two soldiers, staring fixedly, his white lips moving, but uttering no audible word, and wild agony in his fixed eyes. No, there were no words for such a scene as this.

Then, without even allowing a farewell word, the soldiers moved away with their prisoners. Those who held Labeo waited till the others had left the house, and then releasing him, they departed.

Labeo stood motionless. The noise of retreating footsteps was heard as the party mounted and rode away ; he stood and heard, but made no effort to follow.

Cineas stood there too, overwhelmed, with feelings only less keen than those of the stricken husband and father ; bewildered too, and incapable of action.

Labeo stood like one stunned, staring wildly, with the veins in his forehead swollen to bursting, his teeth fixed, his hands clenched, and his eyes glowing like fire. There, too, stood Cineas with his face as white as ashes, and anguish in his features.

They were dumb.

But the strong man roused himself at last, and reason, which had rested for a moment, resumed its sway. With a deep groan he looked around, and then slowly and painfully left the room. He walked out to the portico, looked toward Rome, and listened ; then he walked back into the hall.

There at one end were fixed the images of his ancestors, and beside one of the busts was a dagger which this one had once applied to his own heart, to save the Sulpicii from dishonour. This Labeo took. It was well preserved, and glittering, and keen.

Cineas saw this. He thought of only one thing, and that was that Labeo meditated suicide like his ancestor.

"No, no," he cried, coming toward his friend, in an imploring voice.

"Not yet," said Labeo, in hollow tones. "Other blood must flow first."

"Blood! What blood?"

"I will have vengeance."

"There is hope," cried Cineas; though the word hope seemed like mockery now.

"Hope!" said Labeo, savagely. "Do you think she will abjure Christ? You don't know her."

"I will see Nero."

"Nero," interrupted Labeo. "As well see a tiger."

"I think I can persuade him."

"I know something better than persuasion. Away. Though you are the friend of my soul, you are hateful. All is hateful. I lift up my hands to the gods and curse them. I am going to die, but I will drag down to the shades with me the miscreant Nero!"

Brandishing his dagger, he fled from the house. Soon Cineas heard the quick gallop of a horse.

But one had preceded Labeo from that stricken household. One who knew only one affection, and followed it now that it was torn from him. One trained in British wars, where men rivalled horses in speed, and could run by their side for hours; where charioteers could leap on the poles of their chariots, or on the backs of their horses when in full career, and carry on the fight. Like the avenger of blood, he pursued, and

he had marked out one for vengeance, and that one was Hegio.

In his vengeance he could be patient and tireless. He thought nothing of fatigue, nothing of the length of the way ; he followed, and kept them all in sight.

So at last they entered Rome, and as they rode through the streets, Galdus still pursued.

And how were the prisoners in that party ? At first Helena had been scarce conscious of surrounding events, but the cool night air roused her from her half stupor, and she began to know the worst. She and Marcus were on the same horse, between the officer and Hegio. As she began to realize the worst horrors of her situation, those horrors grew more endurable, and she felt greater strength and calm. She pressed Marcus more closely to her heart, and bending over him, wept profusely. Her tears relieved her. But those tears which fell upon the face of Marcus awakened sympathy in his loving, childish nature. How bold and brave he really was he had already shown. He had already confronted a death by fire, and faced it down. He was the same now, and his high spirit did not falter. For he was one of those who are at the same time keenly susceptible to the sufferings of others, but courageous and indomitable in their own hearts. Sensitive and brave, with the delicacy of a girl, but the nerves and the heart of a lion,—such was Marcus, in whom his mother's tenderness and the strong nature of his father were blended. Such natures are the noblest ; the meek in peace, the bold in war.

“Mother,” said he, “don't weep ; it breaks my heart ; don't weep.”

“It is for you, dearest boy.”

“For me ! Do you weep for me ? And why ? I am not afraid. I can show that I am my father's son. He will learn at last how boldly I can die.”

"I will comfort you," said he, after a pause. "I wish I were older; I am only ten years old, but I am not a coward. I am a Roman boy, and my father's boy, and I am not afraid. I can die, and die bravely."

Many such words did Marcus utter. He in his lofty courage sought to soothe his mother. He had a strange sweet air of superiority, as though he recognized in himself a stronger and a superior nature; and his mother also drew encouragement from that unfaltering courage, that splendid "pluck" of the little boy. Religion came also, with its comforts. She thought of him who had died for her; she reproached herself for her weakness. New strength came to her heart, and at last the prospect of the stake grew less terrible, being eclipsed by the splendour of that heaven that lay beyond.

At length they entered the city. The burnt parts were not yet rebuilt. The party went on through a wide waste of ruined houses. In some places there were rough huts erected, where people were living; in others, the walls of new buildings were rising. It was quite dark, and few people were in the streets. After some time they came to the Suburra, which had all been rebuilt, and showed something like its former busy and varied scene. Down this they went for a short distance, and at length turned off through a side street.

At length they stopped before a large edifice which still bore traces of fire in its ruined walls. It was the prison.

"This is not the place," said Hegio to the officer. "Their quarters are in the house of Padentatus in the Campus Martius. I will lead on to show the way."

The officer said nothing. Hegio then rode forward, and putting himself at the head of the party, went at the usual pace through many streets.

At last they came to a wide open space. It was the Campus Martius. They rode along the street that bordered it, and finally came to a house that stood on the side of this street.

It was alone by itself. The houses near it had not yet been rebuilt. This was an old edifice of massive construction, which had suffered but little from the fire, and had been repaired. Here the party stopped. They all dismounted. No inhabited house was near; the building stood by itself. The officer, who seemed sullen and impatient, hurried his men to the completion of their task. Two soldiers remained behind with Hegio, and the officer rode on with the rest.

Then the door was unfastened, lights were procured, and Hegio and the soldiers took their prisoners inside.

After a time Hegio came forth, mounted his horse, and rode away.

He knew not that he had been watched all this time by one who had seen everything.

He knew not that the avenger was on his track.





XXVII.

The Avenger.

SO Hegio rode off, not knowing that one was on his track who would demand for all this a terrible reckoning.

He rode off slowly and leisurely. His horse and he were both fatigued from the long ride and the excitement.

He wished also to ride slowly, so as to luxuriate in the thought of his perfect revenge. Much had been done, more remained—the punishment due to Christians—the Vatican gardens. The thought was sweet to a soul like his.

He thought of other things. That officer had scorned him, and treated him with insult. He had also hesitated in his duty. This should be punished. Labeo should also fall—and Cineas—and all his enemies.

He let the bridle fall carelessly as he rode along—lost in thoughts that were so pleasing to him—and in this frame of mind he went at the same pace through the city.

At last he approached the Esquiline hill. Here was the favourite residence of Tigellinus, and to this Hegio was bound. The broad open space which had been made to arrest the flames still remained, covered with the *débris* of the ruined houses. All was dark there.

Hegio rode along.

Suddenly a dark form rushed past him through the gloom, and before he could put spurs to the horse, before he could

even think, a mighty grasp had clutched him by the throat and dragged him down from his horse. The animal bounded forward in terror, and rushed off like the wind.

Bruised by his fall, half-suffocated by the grasp of his unknown assailant, Hegio lay on the ground; but bruises and suffocation were forgotten in the deadly fear that rushed through his soul; for he had the most craven spirit that ever animated a human form. He was one of those who can die from fright, and now all his strength ebbed away in a paralysis of fear.

He tried to gasp out words of entreaty, but in vain.

One hand was on his throat, another fumbled at his waist, and loosened the rich girdle that encircled it. For a moment the grasp on his throat was relaxed.

"Spare me," cried Hegio, as he found breath. "I'll give you gold, if you want it. I am an imperial officer. Beware how you harm me. You will suffer for it. I will pay anything—name your price."

The only answer was a tight bandage forced over his mouth and into it, like a gag, from his girdle, which his assailant had twisted into shape, and now firmly bound around him, so that it effectually prevented him from making any sound.

Then, turning him over on his face, the unknown assailant sat on his shoulders, and seizing his arms forced them behind him, and taking his own girdle pinioned them in that place tightly. Hegio felt like a child in the grasp of his enemy.

Then the assailant rose, and holding Hegio firmly, bade him rise also. Without a word, he pushed him along before him. Hegio saw with a feeling of relief that they went toward the Esquiline; but fear came over him, and dread suspicion, as he saw that he was forced toward the ruins of Labeo's house.

Those ruins yet remained. The walls had fallen in most parts; but on one side about half the height still stood erect.

To this shadowy form where the dark wall arose Hegio felt himself impelled, and, incapable of speech or resistance, he walked on.

At last they stopped before an opening which led into the vaults beneath the house. All was intensely dark. For a moment he struggled, and tried to hold back, but the force of his captor was too great. He had to descend. The steps were still covered with beams and ashes. Down these the wretched prisoner was forced, and his captor followed. At last they reached the bottom.

Then Hegio felt himself dragged along some distance in the intense darkness. His fear was greater than ever. In that moment he tasted of the bitterness of death.

Then Hegio was commanded to lie down. He started back and refused. In an instant he was thrown down violently, and his captor again held him down.

"I am going to take away your gag," said a stern and awful voice, in a rude foreign accent, which was unknown to Hegio. "But I hold a dagger at your heart, and if you utter one cry, you die. Answer me, and say nothing more."

The gag was then removed.

"Spare me," gasped Hegio. "If you want gold—"

"Peace, fool, or you die. Answer my questions," said the deep, stern voice.

"What do you want?"

"The lady and the boy."

At that word a cry was heard in the darkness of the vault.

Hegio started, and screamed.

But the gripe of his assailant still held his throat.

"Fool! if you scream again you die," cried his enemy, and holding more tightly, he tried to peer through the gloom.

"Whoever comes near, dies," he cried.

"Who is here?" said a voice, whose tones were familiar indeed to Hegio and Galdus.

Galdus uttered a cry of joy. Hegio fell into a new agony of fear.

"Master! Friend! Labeo!" called Galdus. "We have him here. I know where they are. All is not lost."

"What do you mean?" said Labeo, in an awful voice. "Will you dare to tell me to hope?"

"I tell you, we can save them yet. I followed them, and saw all."

"Where are you, my saviour and my friend?" cried Labeo, whose voice was broken by emotion.

"Here, by the door of the wine-vault. Here; come here; come to me and share my joy, for I have caught him."

"Caught who?" said Labeo, in bewilderment, coming up and touching the shoulder of Galdus. "Who is it that you have brought here?"

"Hegio."

At this Hegio uttered a shriek.

"Peace, dog!—must I strike you to the heart?" said Galdus, in a hoarse whisper.

"Have you caught that viper?" said Labeo, scornfully. "He is yours. Do as you like. I care nothing. But, O my noble friend—saviour of my son—come, let us haste; if you know where they are, let us save them now, or die; let us lose no time."

"Wait a moment. I must ask the dog something," said Galdus.

"Answer me," he cried, imperiously, turning to Hegio.

"Speak," gasped Hegio.

"Will you deliver back the lady and the boy in safety, for your life?"

"Yes, yes," cried Hegio, eagerly; "only let me go, and I swear that before midnight"—

"Fool! that is not what I asked. Let you go! No, no,—not till the lady and boy stand free before us."

Hegio groaned.

"Give us a mandate to the guard to let them go, and if they are delivered to us we will come back and free you."

Hegio groaned.

"They will not obey a mandate from me. But only let me see Tigellinus."

"Never. You go not hence till they are free. Will not your order free them?"

"No. They are imperial prisoners. Only the order of Tigellinus or Nero can free them."

"What can you do, then?"

"Let me see Tigellinus, and I can persuade him."

"It is a waste of words," cried Labeo. "He speaks truly; he has no power. He is no better than a slave. Leave him, and let us haste away."

"Tell me this much," said Galdus. "How many guards are there in that house?"

"What house?"

"Answer me, and don't ask questions—the house where they are imprisoned."

"Only two."

"The two that were left? are there no others?"

"None."

"If I find you have deceived me, it will be worse for you."

"It is true," groaned Hegio; "there are only two."

"Away, then," cried Labeo. "We lose time with this wretch. Haste."

"Wait a moment," said Galdus.

He gagged Hegio once more. Then he bound his feet tightly in a position which left him utterly incapable of motion. Then, lifting him in his arms with the air of one who was perfectly familiar with the place even amid the gloom, he walked on into a place further away from the entrance. It was the wine-vault. The door had been broken from its hinges, and lay

on the floor. Galdus lifted it into its place, and secured the chain, which yet remained there, by a bolt, so that it made the place a safe prison even if Hegio should be able to remove his bonds.

All this took but a short time. Then Galdus and Labeo hurried away. Galdus led the way.

"Are you armed?" said he, as they emerged from the vault. Labeo showed him his dagger.

"That is well. We will need it."

And then they went at a rapid pace toward the Campus Martius.

At last they arrived at the house. Two guards stood at the door, and the moon, which was just rising, illumined the scene. Galdus did not know whether these were the same guards that had first been put there, or whether they had been relieved. But he cared not.

When these two men saw the new-comers, they rose and asked them what they wanted.

"I am Sulpicius Labeo, of the Prætorian guard, and I have come for the prisoners who are here."

"Your warrant," said the guard.

"Here it is," said Galdus, and seizing him by the throat, he hurled him to the ground.

Labeo caught the other guard in his arms, and held him firmly.

"Don't say a word, or you die!" said he, sternly.

The man was silent.

After a short struggle, Galdus had succeeded in binding his prisoner securely. The man lay motionless on the ground.

"Come here, now," said Labeo, when Galdus had finished, "and bind this fellow's hands."

Galdus did so.

"Where are the prisoners? Tell, or you die."

"I will not tell unless you promise me my life," said the man.

"Fool! We can easily find them. But I don't want your life. Take the keys, and lead us to them."

"My hands are bound," said the guard. "The keys are at my waist. Take them, and I will lead the way."

He entered the house. Galdus took the lamp. After a few paces the guard stopped before a door.

With a trembling hand Labeo unlocked it. He took the light, and Galdus remained guarding the soldier. The other one was left outside.

All was still as Labeo entered. But there was a sight which made his aching heart beat fast with joy. There on the floor, on a pile of straw, lay the gentle, the refined lady, and the beautiful boy nestled in her arms. His wife and son, lost but found again, not panic-struck, not despairing, but in a calm sleep.

Labeo stooped down and kissed them, and hot tears fell on the face of his wife. She started and screamed.

Labeo caught her in his arms.

"You are saved! Haste! Fly!"

"O my God! Thou hast heard my prayer!" cried Helena, as she clung to her husband and rose.

"Hush! Haste!" cried Labeo.

He caught up his son, who woke and found himself in the arms of his father. But there was no time for words. A few broken exclamations of wonder, and joy, and love—that was all. Labeo hurried out, carrying his boy, and followed by his wife.

"Galdus," said he, "put both the guards in the room, and lock them in."

Galdus pushed the guard in who was with him, and then went out and dragged in the other.

Then they all hurried off.

The nearest gate was some distance away, and to this they directed their steps.

"Where are we going?" said Galdus.

"To the catacombs."

On their way they met no one. That way lay for the most part through a burnt district which had not been rebuilt. All was silence and desolation.

Soon Helena complained of weakness. The fatigue and the excitement both of grief and joy had been too much for her.

Then Labeo gave Marcus into the arms of the Briton, and taking Helena in his own arms, they walked along as before.

Soon they came to the gate, and the guards offered no resistance. They passed through into one of the roads or streets outside, and turning to the right, went along a side road till they came to the Appian Way. Then along this road they passed, till at last they came to the place at which the Christians entered the catacombs. Cineas had once pointed this out to Labeo, and the latter remembered it well.

A man was standing at a little distance, and as they came up he advanced and looked at them. In the moonlight they could see that he was a fossor.

"Who are you?" he asked, mildly.

"One of us is a Christian," said Labeo, who rightly thought that this man was a kind of scout for the fugitives below.

"We seek safety," said Labeo. "Can you show us the way? Take me to Julius. Do you know him?"

Without a word the man went down and the rest followed. At the bottom he lighted a torch, and went along the winding paths for some distance. At last he came to a place where two or three men were asleep. One of these he awoke.

It was Julius.

He looked up with a bewildered air.

"Labeo! What, you have brought her here, after all. Thank God."

"Can you find a place where she can rest?" asked Labeo.

Julius at once arose, and led the way. But here Galdus

asked the fossor to lead him out again, as he wished to do something in the city, which he had to attend to. Julius took Marcus from him, and Galdus departed. Labeo scarce thought of his departure just then, in his eagerness to get a place of rest for his wife. He thought of it afterward, however.

Julius took them to a place where Lydia was, and then the young girl was awakened, and in her joy at Helena's safety could scarce find words. For she had heard from Julius the great danger that impended.

Soon a place was found where Helena could rest. Weary and worn out, she soon sank into sleep, and Marcus slept with her.

Then Labeo told Julius all.

"And have you, indeed, gone through all this since I saw you last?" said he. "But how did you and Galdus happen to meet at that same place?"

"I," said Labeo, "had gone to find the emperor, and ask safety for my wife and son. If he had refused, I would have stabbed him, and then myself. It was the thought of vengeance that sustained me. Galdus had his own plans, and could have delivered them without me, and would have done so; but I don't know where he could have concealed them; perhaps in the vaults. Yes; that must have been his intention."

"And where is Galdus now?"

Labeo started.

"He is gone! Ah, Hegio! I see your fate in this! Yes, the Briton will not be cheated of his vengeance."

"What do you mean?"

"Galdus left at once when we first arrived. He can only have one purpose, to have his revenge on Hegio."

Julius said nothing. What that revenge was to be, they could not form an idea. The barbarian had his own ways.

Labeo could not sleep; but it was not sorrow that made him wakeful. The revulsion from despair to hope was great. In

the thought of present safety he lost sight of the future. The gloom, the damp, and the rough rocks that surrounded him were all forgotten. One great joy filled his soul, and that was that he had rescued his wife and boy.

When Galdus left the catacombs, he walked rapidly back toward the city. It was now not more than three hours past midnight, and the moon shone brightly.

In his pursuit during the previous part of the night he had meditated many things.

He knew that to which Hegio had doomed the boy and his mother,—death, a death by fire. Fire had formed a conspicuous part in the acts of Hegio. Galdus yet bore the scars of flames kindled by him. This was the second time that he had saved Marcus from that fate.

He had thought over all this in his pursuit. He had fed his fierce barbaric soul with this one hope. He had planned all his course, and knew how it should be decided.

He entered the city and reached the Esquiline, and the ruins of Labeo's house at last rose before him,—a reminder of what he had suffered, a goad to his vengeful passion.

The vaults were dark and silent. He feared that he might be robbed of his prey. If that iron hand of his could have trembled, then it would have done so as in his impatience he felt the fastenings of the door of the dungeon.

They had been untouched.

He tore open the door—he sprang in. There lay his victim yet. He dragged him out into the outer vault.

Hegio could say nothing and do nothing. It was as well. The nature of Galdus was inexorable.

He unbound the arms of Hegio, and drew off his outer robe and his costume. These had the decorations which indicated a servant of the imperial household. These Galdus laid aside. Then, taking off his own tunic, he put it on Hegio. After this, he dressed himself in Hegio's clothes.

Hegio, while his arms were free, made a desperate attempt to unfasten the gag, but Galdus sternly ordered him to desist, and displayed his dagger.

Then he raised his hands imploringly, but to no purpose. For, after Galdus had completed his dress, he pinioned the arms of Hegio once more.

Then he unbound his feet.

Holding him then by the end of the fastening that bound his arms, Galdus led him out of the vaults and down the hill, and over the waste place, toward the Campus Martius.

Hegio made no resistance. He thought he was being led to the prison in which he had confined the mother and child, so as to assist in some plan of delivery.

To his surprise, when they reached the Campus Martius, his captor kept straight on toward the Tiber, where the bridge crossed that led to the Vatican.

Crossing the bridge, they reached the entrance to the gardens.

Here they were stopped by guards.

"I have brought a Christian arrested to-night, and he is ordered for instant execution."

At these words Hegio gave a wild bound backward. But Galdus held him firmly. The soldiers stepped forward and seized the prisoner.

"He is to be clothed in the tunica molesta and burned."

"When?"

"Now."

"Who are you, and what is your authority?"

"Here," said Galdus, showing a ring which he had taken from his prisoner's finger. The soldiers looked at it, but did not seem to see anything in it. But Galdus's dress showed that he must be some one in authority.

"Who are you?"

"Hegio," said Galdus, "of the imperial household. This

man is ordered for immediate execution, and I am to stay to see that it is performed."

The soldiers thought it was all right. So many Christians had been brought there to be burned, that it was a very common thing to them. So, without further questioning, they led Hegio away, and Galdus followed.

The soldiers took down the name which Galdus gave as that of the prisoner. It was, "Galdus, a Briton."

The true Galdus watched the false Galdus suffer.

There was no horror in his mind at the scene. He had watched such sights before. He had seen the hideous spectacles which the Druids exhibited, when scores of hapless wretches were burned in wicker cages. He had seen his own relatives suffer thus. He found no difficulty in looking on an enemy.

The wretched Hegio could say nothing, and do nothing. His eyes and face expressed his agony. Too well he knew what was before him. But that agony only filled Galdus with exultation.

The victim was covered with the usual coat of tar and flax, and bound to the stake.

Then the torch was applied.





XXVIII.

Freedom.

DURING this time, Cineas had been ignorant of everything. Plunged in grief, and afflicted with the worst apprehensions, he dreaded the impending calamities, yet knew not how to avoid them. After Labeo had left he remained, and gave way to the most gloomy fears. With folded arms he paced up and down restlessly for many hours, trying in vain to think of some way by which he might rescue the captives.

At last, unable to think of anything, and unable also to endure his misery, he mounted his horse and rode toward Rome. In his despair, he resolved upon one step which he would not take to save his own life, but brought himself to for the sake of these dear ones. That was to appeal to Tigellinus.

It was early morning when he reached Rome, and he went at once to the house of Nero's favourite. A great crowd of clients already beset the doors, waiting to pay their respects to their patron. Cineas made his way through these, and by liberal bribery induced the servants to awaken Tigellinus, and convey to him a request for an interview.

Perhaps nothing could have given greater joy to this man. To have Cineas, the favourite of Nero, the intellectual, the virtuous, the proud Cineas, the man who stood in a position in which he could never be, to have such a man coming to him as a suppliant was sweet indeed. Tigellinus saw how heavily the

blow had fallen, since it had crushed a man like this. He was eager to see him, and hurried out to the chief hall, into which Cineas had been admitted.

Cineas gravely saluted him. He was very pale, but calm and dignified. There was nothing of fear or of servility in the haughty Megacleid, but a certain lofty demeanour, which was gall and wormwood to Tigellinus.

Cineas at once proceeded to business. After apologizing for such an intrusion, he said,—

“It is a matter of life and death. My sister and her child are under arrest. I wish to save them, and come to you. No one knows your power better than I. State what you wish to be done, and I will do it.”

Tigellinus lowered his eyes before the calm and penetrating gaze of Cineas, and refused to look him in the face.

“They are prisoners of state. The law has control over them. What can I do?” he answered.

“You don’t understand me,” said Cineas. “This is what I wish. I came here to ransom them at any cost, no matter what.”

“They cannot be ransomed. You must appeal to the state, not to me.”

“Their life is worth more to me,” said Cineas, without heeding what Tigellinus had said, “than a thousand others. Will you take a thousand in exchange? I will give you for them a thousand slaves.”

“I have told you,” said Tigellinus, “that I can do nothing. They are not in my power. You must go to Cæsar.”

“You will not understand me,” said Cineas, coldly. “Have I not said that I will ransom them at any cost?” And he placed strong emphasis on these words. “I am rich. Name your price. Whatever you ask, I will give.”

The eyes of Tigellinus sparkled for a moment with avaricious longing. But he immediately replied,—

"You do not know what you are saying. I am not their owner. They are not slaves. They are prisoners. If they were in my power, I could not sell them. I would try them by the laws, and if they were innocent I would let them go free."

"Name your price," said Cineas, with the same disregard of what the other had said. "Name it. Will millions buy them?"

Tigellinus looked for a moment at Cineas, and then looked down. A great struggle arose within him. Avarice was strong. Millions were not to be so easily gained every day. But then there arose a stronger feeling—hate; and there came with it jealousy and revenge, and these all overmastered the other. It would be worth millions to crush the man whom he so hated. Perhaps, also, all those millions might be his, and while revenge would be satiated, avarice also would gain all that it wished.

With such feelings and thoughts as these, he shook his head.

"No," he said, "I am powerless. This is not a thing of money; it belongs to law."

"MILLIONS!" said Cineas, with strong impressiveness.

"Enough," answered Tigellinus, rising and trying to assume an appearance of dignity. "You know not what you are doing. You are trying to violate law by bribing a minister. I cannot thus allow myself to be insulted by dishonourable proposals. I have told you that these prisoners are in the hands of the law. That law must take its course."

Cineas said no more. He understood pretty accurately the motives that actuated Tigellinus, and saw that all efforts here were worse than useless, since he was exposed to ignominy without any chance of succeeding in his wishes. So, without another word, he withdrew.

Slowly and sadly he departed, thinking what might be best to be done. Could he not use his wealth in another way.

Could he not hire a band of desperadoes, and find out the place where the prisoners were confined, and rescue them. The desperadoes could easily be found. Rome was full of them. But more than this had to be done. If he rescued them, what then? Where could he fly? True, there were the catacombs; but that seemed almost as bad as death.

Then he thought of Nero. Might not something be done there? Nero might grant him this thing—his first and only request. It was impossible that Nero could feel any interest in this thing. It was evidently the act of Tigellinus alone. Nero, in his profound indifference, might grant him this, and think nothing of it.

This seemed his only resource.

Then he thought of Labeo, and his dagger, and his frenzy. What would be the result of this? He had gone to seek Nero. Would he find him? There would be an appeal to Cæsar before his, and if this first appeal failed, what then? Would Labeo, in his despair, do as he had threatened, and use his dagger against the emperor?

Perplexed and disturbed, he rode along, but finally thought that the shortest way to end all doubts was to go at once to the emperor. He knew that no time was to be lost; the necessity of the hour called, above all, for haste.

He yielded to this feeling out of pure despair. It might be better; it could not be worse. He would go to Cæsar.

Full of this thought he rode toward the palace in the Vatican Gardens. He came to the Campus Martius, and crossing over it, drew near to the bridge which spanned the river.

Now, as he drew near to the bridge, his attention was arrested by one who crossed it and came toward him.

His figure was remarkable. Clothed in the costume of one who belonged to the imperial household, he yet had the features of some northern barbarian. His flaxen hair, his heavy beard and moustache, gave him a wild and savage air.

There could be no mistake in that face.

It was Galdus.

Full of amazement at this encounter, and at such a transformation, Cineas stopped his horse mechanically, and stared in wonder at the new-comer. The other advanced with a strange smile of triumph in his face.

"Galdus!" cried Cineas.

"Rejoice!" exclaimed the other. "All are saved."

"Saved!" responded Cineas; and he could say no more. A full tide of joy rushed through him—joy too great for utterance. Yet that joy was equalled, if not surpassed, by his astonishment.

"What is all this? How are they saved? Is it really true? And what means this dress? What are you doing here? Where are they?"

Cineas would have poured forth a whole torrent of such questions, if Galdus had not checked him.

"It is dangerous to stand talking here," he said. "We must hurry away, and that quickly. We have been doing things this night that will send all Rome after us to hunt us up."

"The emperor?" faltered Cineas, thinking of Labeo's threat.

"I don't know anything about him. We have had to do with men of another sort. But haste—come—follow me; I will tell you where they are, and will tell you all."

Saying this, Galdus hurried on with great strides, and Cineas turned and followed. Not a word was spoken till they had left the city gates. Then Galdus told him all.

He told him of his own pursuit and his capture of Hegio; of his meeting with Labeo, and their rescue of the prisoners. Finally he told him, in words of terrible import, of his vengeance on Hegio.

Such vengeance made Cineas shudder in the midst of his joy. He looked with wonder on this man, whose affection made him

as tender as a mother to Marcus, but whose revenge was so fearful on an enemy.

Where would all this end? The deed had been one of no common kind. In that rescue the majesty of the state had been violated, and to this offence there had been added a worse crime.

With such thoughts they reached the entrance to the catacombs—a place sufficiently familiar to Cineas, yet one which he shuddered to think of as the retreat of Helena and Marcus.

Down the descent they went, and along the passage-way, and soon Cineas found those whom he had given up for lost.

In the joy of that reunion one or two days passed, and the gloom was lightened by the thought of safety. But soon, when safety became familiar, there arose a deep sadness in all. How could such a life be endured, and what was that life worth? It might last long; and such tender ones as Helena and Marcus could have nothing before them but death.

Cineas sickened, and grew hopeless among these dreary shades, where the tombs of the dead appeared on every side.

He grew desperate. He determined to risk his life to save those whom he loved. Why should he not?

Nero had always yielded to the influence which he had thus far contrived to exercise. Why should he not try it now?

He determined to do so.

On the morning of the third day he departed on this purpose. Nero had returned to Rome, and Cineas found him in the palace in the Vatican.

He went there boldly, and entered the presence of Cæsar with the air of a privileged person. He had made up his mind to risk all in this one venture.

As he entered, he saw that Tigellinus was there too.

Nero had only returned to Rome on that morning. Tigellinus had been telling him a long story. It was about this arrest, and the rescue of the prisoners, and the death of the

guard. The other soldier had been found in the morning locked up in the room in which the prisoners had been confined. Hegio had also disappeared most mysteriously. This was what Tigellinus had to tell. Nero looked enraged and angry.

As soon as Cineas entered, Nero regarded him with an evil smile.

Now Cineas had put on the most radiant and joyous expression. He had made up his mind not merely to death, but to humiliation. He determined to stoop to any flattery, or any sacrifice of self-respect, if by so doing he might influence Nero in his favour, for the sake of Helena. This armed him at all points.

"So," said Nero, dryly; "you are here at last. Why have you not been here before?"

Cineas pleaded delicacy of feeling. Cæsar had been in danger, and had been engaged in a work of self-preservation, and punishment of his enemies. He could not think of intruding such trifles as he had to offer to Cæsar's notice at such a time. But he had come as soon as he thought circumstances could warrant it.

All this, which was expressed with an easy grace, and a delicacy of flattery peculiar to Cineas alone, seemed very agreeable to Nero. Yet he still maintained a harsh demeanour.

"Athenian," said he, in a mocking tone, "you who admire Socrates so greatly, do you think you have enough of his philosophy to die like him? For, to tell you the truth, I am thinking very seriously of trying some such experiment on you."

Cineas smiled gayly. "Yes," he answered; "I think so. But before you try it, you must let me tell you the best story that ever either you or I have heard in our lives. It is a real one, too, and I have but lately heard it."

Nero was charmed by his gay indifference, and his curiosity was excited at the idea of a story; for no one loved a story better than he, and no one could tell a story better than Cineas.

"You glorious philosopher!" he cried, changing his whole manner into one which was like his old cordiality. "Never yet have I met with a man who could hear such words as these from me."

"What words?" said Cineas, indifferently. "Oh, about death. What is death? I don't care much about either death or life. Death; why death is only a sort of transition state, a point of change from one form of life to another. Poison me, or burn me, whenever you like. It is quite a matter of indifference to me."

At this Tigellinus stared in stupid and unfeigned amazement. Nero burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

"You are the greatest of men," he cried. He then embraced Cineas in a sort of rapture. "There is no one like you. O Cineas, you will have to teach me your splendid indifference to death."

"I can teach nothing to one like you. When with you I do not teach; I learn," said Cineas. "But as you are going to kill me, I must make haste and tell my story."

"Kill you! I wouldn't kill you for the world. Why, man, you are a wonder among men. But tell me this story. I long to hear it."

At this moment Tigellinus excused himself to Nero, and took his departure in deep disgust. He saw the triumph of Cineas, and he was both puzzled and maddened by it. What could he do—he, a vulgar caterer to animal passion—beside a man like this, who jested at death, and laughed in the very face of the fearful master of death?

Then Cineas began his story. He exerted himself as he had never done before. He knew the over-mastering love which Nero had for a fine dramatic situation, and for scenic effect. So he threw himself with his whole soul into his narrative. And never were his wit and vivid descriptive power so conspicuous as now. Nero listened with delight.

He began with a description of Hegio—his baseness, his villany, and his attempts to ruin his master, which had ended in his own dismissal.

Then he showed how Hegio had tried to take vengeance. He told of the burning of the house, and the departure of Labeo to the country.

Hurrying over the circumstances of the arrest, he drew Nero's attention to Galdus as he followed the horseman. Nero listened breathlessly to the story of the avenger on the track of the criminal; he heard how Galdus caught Hegio, and dragged him down, and bound him and carried him away to the vaults.

Then came the story of the rescue, which was told with thrilling effect. Nero appeared delighted with the capture of the guards, and burst forth into exclamations of rapture about the Briton.

But that which afforded to him the highest and most enthusiastic joy was the final vengeance of Galdus on Hegio. To this he listened in breathless excitement, and questioned Cineas over and over again.

The change of the clothes and the substitution of one for the other seemed admirable to him.

"Oh," he cried, "if Tigellinus had only heard this! He does not know it. He brought me a stupid and clumsy version of this unparalleled narrative. His story was, in every respect, commonplace. This is divine. He has not heard the best part. It is worthy of Sophocles. It would make the plot of a tragedy better than any that I have ever met with. And it shall make one. I myself will write it. I will make this story known to the world. I will make this glorious Briton immortal.

"But where is he?" he cried. "Why did you not bring him? I must have him here and study him. He is a living demi-god. Bring him here at once."

Cineas explained that they were all fugitives.

"Fugitives ! Why, the play has ended. Let them go home. All of them. I must have this Briton, and he shall tell me himself how he felt and acted when he watched the flames. Send them all home. I will give you leave. I will write a pardon for them all. They have performed parts in a narrative which excels all that ever I heard."

And on the impulse of the moment, Nero wrote out a formal pardon, and thrust it into the hand of Cineas.

"Bring that Briton to me," said he. "I must see him. I must see my Roman again, too. I had nothing to do with this. It was all Tigellinus. But it has turned out well. It has been so admirably managed. We must go to work at that tragedy, Cineas. You shall advise. I will have the benefit of your taste.

"I am glad you have come. I am tired of these Christians. They are stupid. There is no more pleasure to be had out of them. I will go back again with new delight to my art and my poetry. We will renew the happy hours which we used to pass in these high pursuits."

So Nero spoke, saying much more of a similar import, all of which showed that the literary taste, which had lain dormant for a time, had revived in its old strength. Cineas entered with apparent ardour into all the plans which Nero proposed. He consented to do anything and everything. He held in his hand the precious document which gave life and liberty to his friends. That was all that he wished.





XXIX.

Changes.

THEY had passed three days in the catacombs. How sweet and fair seemed the face of nature as they emerged and saw again the glad and glorious sunlight, the green foliage, the rich vegetation, and the abodes of man. That life under-ground had a double horror : it was in darkness, and it was among the dead. It was the valley of the shadow of death. Alas ! that shadow had passed over their souls.

There was a great change in Marcus. His sensitive and impressible nature had received a shock which promised to be more than temporary. A profound melancholy, which seemed strange and unnatural in a boy, had been forced upon him. The horror of that darkness had impressed itself upon his soul.

They entered again upon their old life at the villa ; but that life, such as it once was, could not return again. It was not easy to obliterate the past. All the house was filled with recollections of that night of agony, when Helena clung to Labeo, and Marcus clung to Helena, and the father, in his anguish, looked upon the retreating forms of those loved ones, lost, as he thought, for ever. Helena could not forget. She had brought Lydia back with her, a pale, meditative girl, whose life there had changed her nature, and whose new terror had filled with a settled melancholy. They were all safe now, at least for the present ; but that great danger which they had endured

seemed to make all life less sweet, and they lived and spoke as though it might come again.

Galdus again united himself to that boy whom he had twice snatched from death ; but the boy was changed. No longer did the halls resound with his merry laugh. He had known grief, and had lived years. He was pensive and silent. Formerly he communicated to Galdus all his feelings, his hopes, his fears, his joys, his sorrows ; but now he had known a deeper experience, and those feelings which he had had became too strong for utterance.

Galdus never spoke of Hegio to Marcus. He knew the boy's nature, and his abhorrence of strife and blood. To tell him of his vengeance would fill that boy with horror. Galdus felt this in his own dull way, and was silent about it with Marcus.

But there was one to whom he had an opportunity of telling his story, and that was Nero. Cineas was often reminded of it by Cæsar, who urged him to bring the Briton to him. At length he complied. Nero gazed with admiration upon the gigantic frame of his visitor, and read in his stern, resolute face a power which he saw in few around him. Galdus was not all a savage. His own turn of mind, which was elevated, had gained new development from long association with Marcus, and there was some degree of intellectual refinement in his bold, barbaric face, which inspired respect and admiration.

Called on to give an account of his doings to Nero, Galdus told the whole story. His narrative had not that elegance which had characterized the story of Cineas, nor was it so skilfully arranged, or so well brought out in its strong points ; but, after all, the effect was at least equal.

For here stood the man himself, and he acted it out. As he proceeded in his relation, his excitement grew more and more intense. He lived it over again. All the feelings that had burned within him on that memorable night lived and glowed

over again. His wild face was by turns animated by sorrow, hate, vengeance, or triumph. His yellow hair, thick beard, and large frame, his guttural intonation and foreign accent, his wild gesticulations, all made him most impressive.

Nero, in his rapture, took from his own neck a gold chain, and flung it around that of Galdus.

He declared that this story had given him a new inspiration. He would go on with his tragedy, and it should astonish the world. He vowed, also, that Galdus should act out the whole scene in person. Such was the effect of this on Nero.

After a while, Labeo went to Court, from no particular motive, but partly out of a vague sense of duty, and partly from the force of an old impulse toward promotion. Very faint had that desire for promotion now become. The terrible lesson which he had learned had weakened ambition, and showed him, in a way which he could never forget, the utter uncertainty of the most flattering hopes. He turned his thoughts more fondly than ever on that wife and son whom he had so nearly lost. He began to think of happiness with them, without any larger dignity or greater power than he had now.

But, above all, his position in the Court was painful to him for this reason, that he could not endure even the sight of that man by whose warrant so terrible a blow had been dealt on him; that man against whom he had once armed himself, and whose life he had sworn to take. Could he now ask favours from this man, or, even if they were offered, could he accept them? He felt that he could not.

His silence and reserve were not noticed by Nero. Labeo had always been thus, and Nero had been accustomed to look on him as a sort of lay figure in his Court, an ornament, a work of art. Nor could the emperor imagine that the events of the arrest were viewed in any other light by Labeo than by himself. The heart of that father and husband lay hidden from his sight; that there should be there bitter memories and deep wounds,

was something which was simply inconceivable to a man like him.

After some months, Labeo found that this life was unendurable, and he began to loathe it,—to loathe the miserable crew of courtiers, and the hateful tyrant who presided. He determined to leave.

Other things influenced him; but, above all, Marcus. Month after month had passed, but the gloom that had settled down over that young heart had been in no way dissipated. His father and mother looked with deep concern on the thin face, which seemed to grow more melancholy in its expression every day. He was for ever brooding over his own thoughts, and nursing the sombre fancies which came over his mind. It was a state of mind over which a man might grow mad, and over which a boy or a child must die. This Labeo saw. He watched with anguish the lack-lustre eye, the listless motion, and the unelastic step of that son, whose bounding life had a short time before animated all the house and filled it with joyousness. Marcus had ceased to laugh and play. His father felt as though he had ceased to be himself. He felt that above all there was needed a total change of scene, and could think of no place so good as Britain.

To go back there was to give up all his hopes of immediate advancement; but Labeo had grown to care little for this. Britain would afford new scenes. They had been there before, and loved it. Marcus would revive, perhaps, in that bracing air from the Northern Sea, and resume his former nature.

Labeo had no difficulty in getting the command of a legion. Nero was quite indifferent whether he went or stayed; and so all was soon arranged for their departure to a place where there would be no gloomy memories for ever suggested to them, and no perpetual fear of new dangers.

Sulpicia was left behind with Isaac as steward. Lydia remained also, and Cineas, who had resolved to linger in Rome

some time longer. Labeo took with him his wife and boy, and Galdus.

Time passed on, and Tigellinus had endeavoured to divert Nero from his revived literary tastes. It was the nature of this man to endure no rivalry of any kind. He wished above all to withdraw the emperor from association with Cineas, for as long as this lasted he felt that his power was only half secured. To effect this he drew the emperor away from Rome more frequently than before, and for longer periods. The Golden House was in process of erection, and till it was finished Nero had no place worthy of his grandeur. Other places afforded greater variety, and at Baïæ, or at Naples, Nero could find more novelty and equal luxury. Cineas felt infinitely relieved by this new estrangement of Nero. Association with the emperor was hateful. Now that his loved friends were safe, he had no longer any object at Court, and desired nothing so much as to withdraw quietly. His desire was gratified, and in the best way, for the Court was withdrawn from him, and Nero, with his usual fickleness, soon thought no more of his "philosopher." His tragedy remained an unfinished conception, and the creatures of fancy were supplanted by the horrors of fact.

Tigellinus worked on all the evil passions of his master, and on none more successfully than on his cruelty. Many of the best men in Rome fell beneath his machinations. Cineas had vanished from the scene, and Tigellinus thought no more about him, but transferred all his envy to Petronius. This gay, careless, and light-hearted man still clung to the Court, for it was his best-loved home, and neither the machinations of Tigellinus nor the increasing cruelty of Nero deterred him.

At last Petronius fell. Tigellinus made up a charge against him that he had taken part in the great conspiracy, and Nero believed, or at least thought fit to pretend so. Nero happened at the time to be on one of his excursions in the neighbourhood of Naples Bay. Petronius was following him, but was arrested

at Cumæ. He saw that he was doomed, and met death with that gaiety and calm contempt with which he had viewed the world all his life. He died in a characteristic manner. He would not live in suspense, and so scornfully prepared to quit the world, yet did not wish to seem in a hurry about it. He opened his veins, and closed them again at intervals, losing a small quantity of blood each time, and gradually growing feebler. But during the whole time he was surrounded by friends, with whom he chatted and jested in his usual careless manner. He would not talk on grave philosophical subjects, such as the immortality of the soul, or in contempt of death, but chose rather to listen to music and song, love-strains, and gay melodies. He gave presents to all, walked about in-doors and out, lay down to sleep for a time, and thus gaily and calmly dallied and trifled with death. To his scorn of death, he added equal scorn of his destroyers, Tigellinus and Nero, and spent his last hours in writing an account of Nero's debauchery, which he sent to the emperor sealed with his own seal.

Meanwhile the persecutions of the Christians had greatly slackened. Many returned to their homes, and contented themselves with eluding observation as much as possible. The emperor had greater and more important victims, and cared no more for these. Yet his edict against them was still in force; the lesser officials were still on the look-out, and although the humbler Christians might pass unnoticed, yet there were some who had been mentioned by name, and whose arrest was still sought after as a matter of importance. Prominent among these was Julius.

During all this time old Carbo had been a changed man. From the first he mourned over his son, and inwardly repented of his own harshness. He secretly admired the constancy and heroism of his son, of whose situation and bold performances he kept himself always well informed. He longed to find some way of regaining him and becoming reconciled, but did not

know how. His Roman pride prevented him from making the first advances, and Julius could not come to him. Thus he struggled with his grief for a long time, until at last he could bear it no longer.

One day he visited Cineas, and talked in his usual strain about the evils of the time. He inveighed bitterly against Nero, and enumerated all his crimes. Finally, he spoke of the persecution of the Christians as the most abominable of all his acts, and declared that the virtue of the Christians was fully proved to his mind by the fact that they were singled out by Nero for his vengeance. Had they been what he once supposed, they would never thus have suffered.

Cineas listened to all this in surprise and in joy. He thought that he might perhaps be able to bring together the father and the son; he was rejoiced to think that there was such happiness in store for his friend, and was wondering how he could best bring about a meeting, when old Carbo, who had been silent for some time, suddenly came over to where Cineas was, and, in a voice which was scarce audible, and broken by emotion, exclaimed,—

“Cineas, you know where he is. Take me to him.”

That settled all the difficulty. Right gladly Cineas consented. They set off immediately to that place where Julius had been so long, and soon reached it. Carbo shuddered as he descended, and walked through the gloomy labyrinth, and thought that this was the place to which his son had been banished. And for what? For integrity, for true religion, and for virtue.

At last the father found the son. Leaving Carbo behind, Cineas brought Julius to him. Julius came, pale and haggard as he now had grown, bearing about him the marks of a wretched life, with his pallid countenance rendered more so by the dim torch-light. Carbo looked at him for a moment, and then caught him in his arms.

"Oh, my son!" he murmured, and burst into a flood of tears.

"Father," said Julius, who was affected to an equal degree, "I knew all the time that you forgave me."

But Carbo now began cursing himself for his weakness, and tried to check his tears; but then, looking again at his son, fresh tears came to his eyes, till at last he sat down and buried his face in his hands, and wept bitterly.

Now that the old man had found his son, and taken him back to his heart, he could not endure the thought of further separation. He was anxious for Julius to leave instantly, and come home. He offered to protect him against all danger; and Julius smiled sadly and lovingly, as the old man declared that he would lay down his life for his son if any one tried to arrest him.

"I know you would, father, as I would for you; but I have other things to consider. It is not fear of myself that keeps me here. I don't have any. I could easily elude any pursuers. But there are some here who cannot do so. They are less active, and more timid than I am. We who are strong have to bear the burdens of the weak. That is our religion. Some of these poor, timid souls would not dare to quit this place. While there is a single dear child of Christ in this place, I must stay, and help, and comfort him. It is the duty of some to teach; it is my duty to protect the fearful and the weak. And I think I have done some little for them."

Carbo's eyes glistened as he looked on his son, and heard these sentiments.

"Heaven help them, boy, if they lose you! I understand you. I must yield. It is hard. But I can say nothing. If I were a young man I would turn Christian, and come here and help you. You are living gloriously, my noble boy. But will I never see you? Must I go back and live without you? Will you let your old father die, and not come near him?"

"I will come and see you whenever I can," said Julius. "I will spend days with you. Soon, perhaps, I will be able to stay at home. Be patient, dear father. Think of what I have to do. We will meet often now. Thank God that this misunderstanding is over."

Julius kept his word. His visits to his father were frequent, and sometimes protracted. He never encountered any danger. The new life, and the partial deliverance from the gloom and damp of the vaults, had a marked effect. His pallor changed into a fresher hue, and his spirit became brighter.

But there was one thing which exercised a more powerful effect for good than even the bright air and sunshine and reconciliation with his father.

There was one who always looked out for his visits, and counted the days of his absence, and heard the sound of his voice with a beating heart—one whose whole being, from which all other ties had been torn, now turned fondly to him, and found in him the great consolation of life. This was Lydia.

The visits of Julius grew more and more protracted in length. Much of his time was passed at Labeo's villa. His father followed him there. When Julius was away the old man would come there, knowing that the place was dear to his boy, and longing to speak to some one about him. Sometimes Cineas was the one whom he selected; but he soon found another hearer who was never tired of hearing him speak on his one theme, who was willing to listen for hours, and prompt him, and incite him with questions. Carbo found a charm in this listener that he knew nowhere else. And so at last he came to Labeo's house every day, to talk of his one theme to Lydia.

He ceased railing at Rome, and his former bitterness and cynicism had departed, and given way to a milder temper and a gentler mood. The stern face with its military air, and the mild voice with which he always addressed himself to Lydia.

sometimes reminded her of her own father, and made her love the father of Julius.

Time passed on, and Julius began to recover his former robust and energetic health. Life had become sweet. The catacombs were only used at times in sudden fear. The most timid had ventured forth, and had resumed their former lives. At last Julius was able to remain altogether at his father's house.

Now Julius and Lydia were near one another. Bound together by common remembrance of suffering endured in common, it seemed at last as though their sorrows were over for a time.

All the nature of Julius had been pervaded by the influence of that fair young girl. He had seen her in her humble garret, where she used to live with her father; he had watched her in the gloomy catacombs, where she had closed her father's eyes. He had saved her life over and over.

Out in the free air once more, he could not endure the thought of only the slight separation that now kept them apart. Life was dull and unmeaning till she was with him to share all. He could not wait even till his safety was secured.

If I wait till then, I must wait till I die. She shall take me as I am, in danger, and with death before me, and we will share the same fate, whatever it is. As long as I am a Christian this lot will be mine. And what is more, she is in the same danger.

So Lydia was taken from her life of dependence and loneliness. Carbo's house, though humble in comparison with others, seemed like a palace to Lydia. Her presence made it brighter and more radiant in the eyes of Julius. The old man had need no longer to travel to Labeo's house to find one to whom he could talk about his boy. The wife of Julius loved that theme better than any other, and so happily did the days of Carbo pass, that he seemed to have renewed his youth, and at last did not know which he loved best, his son, or his new daughter.



XXX.

The Chief Martyr.



WHEN the Christians of Rome were thus beginning to breathe freely again, and to return to their former avocations with some degree of security, the little community was filled with joy by an event which was to them of the greatest importance.

This was no less a thing than the arrival of the great apostle among them.

With him came Philo, who had accompanied him everywhere in his wanderings, and who now seemed paler, weaker, but, in spite of all that, more ardent and energetic than ever.

Many were the stories which these poor afflicted ones in Rome had to tell of their persecutions and sufferings. In the relief which they now had from the weight of oppression, they were yet conscious of danger. That danger they all saw was most likely to fall on the very eminent ones, and of them all the most eminent by far was Paul.

For him they feared. They entreated him to save himself from danger by quietness and obscurity. But Paul's nature did not allow him to do this. He had passed his life in encountering perils, and as he fully expected to die at some time or other for his religion, he was as ready to lay down his life in Rome as in any other place.

He therefore continued his labours with the utmost publicity, and in all respects acted just as if the Christians were tolerated

by the government. Under these circumstances he soon attracted attention ; and as there were many officials here, as there always are everywhere, who desire to earn distinction by a show of zeal, his labours were at last terminated by his arrest.

After his trial he was imprisoned in the dungeons of the Mamertine Prison, at the foot of the Capitoline Hill.

Here he prepared for his death. Philo, who was his constant attendant, had been arrested at the same time, placed in the same prison, and doomed to the same fate.

Enough time elapsed between his arrest and his execution to enable Paul to receive the visits of some friends, and administer comfort to them ; and to write to other friends at a distance words of divine consolation.

Among those who came to see the prisoner was Cineas.

He had seen him before, when engaged in the labour of his life.

He now looked with admiration upon this man in his prison, who stood before him in his chains, calm, self-possessed, and joyous, with an exhilaration of manner that filled him with astonishment.

The apostle expressed himself not only perfectly willing to suffer imprisonment, but really desirous to die. He said that he was ready to depart, and that departure from earth meant arrival at heaven. Thus far he had fought the battle of Christ, and now his warfare was over. He would now gain the reward of his toils. Immortal blessedness lay before him ; glory such as no mind could conceive ; bliss unspeakable and eternal. His fight was fought ; his race was run ; he had been faithful, and heaven was secure.

Cineas looked upon the attitude of Paul in the face of death with the profoundest admiration. He thought that the death of Socrates, which he had always so loved to contemplate, would be repeated in the man before him, and even owned to

himself that there were things in which the apostle surpassed the philosopher.

Paul did not remain long in prison.

A few days afterwards the end came.

He was spared the keener agonies of death by fire. The Roman public had long since become satiated with horrors, and the spectacle of a man burning at the stake now excited different feelings from what it once did.

And now, when Paul's turn came, it was considered that the laws would be satisfied if he suffered capital punishment like any other person. Fire was an extraordinary application ; it was not required here.

The common execution by beheading was allotted to him.

His lofty spirit was sustained to the last by a high, unfaltering faith—faith that was more than faith, since it had become intensified to knowledge and conviction.

He knew that heaven awaited him. He saw the crown of glory that was laid up for him on high.

The sunshine of that heaven seemed to radiate his face ; and those who looked on him thought that they saw the face of an angel.

As that noble head fell beneath the axe, there was one who looked on, viewing everything, who saw in this the grandest triumph of Christianity.

“ Farewell, O Paul ! ” he murmured. “ Noble soul—Christian—more than philosopher ! Go up to heaven to thy kindred ! Thou art sublime. Thou hast surpassed Socrates.”

With Paul, another suffered.

His friend, his constant companion, his faithful and zealous associate.

At last Philo found the end of his sorrows and his tears, and this was his happiness, that he could lay down his life for Christ, and die by the side of Paul.

There were loving hands which took up the remains and bore

them to that place already consecrated by the Christian dead, and by the presence of those who had once lived there in persecution, of whom the world was not worthy—to that place which later ages should fill with Christian monuments, and time still succeeding should hallow with the holy remembrances of martyrs.

There they buried Paul.

There, too, they buried Philo, in the same grave in which his mother lay ; and over his mother's inscription they carved a dove bearing an olive-branch—the emblem of the Peace that he had gained—and the simple words,—

“THE BISOMUM OF PHILO AND CLYMENE.”





XXXI.

Bereavements.



ABEO had found a home in Britain, not far from London. His villa was on the outskirts of the city, and looked toward the river. London had been rebuilt, and showed but few traces of the devastation to which it had been subject.

Here he thought, in this quiet and peaceful spot, far removed from the painful remembrances of Rome, that Marcus might forget the past, and that the weight might be removed from his young heart, and the seeds of disease be destroyed. But Marcus showed no signs of improvement. In his dreams he still suffered the horrors of the catacombs, and lived among the tombs, and stood beside the dead. Not easily could his sensitive nature shake off the dread impressions of that place of woe. As he dreamed, so he thought, and his father shuddered as he heard him always talk, when he did talk, about death and the grave. In vain the resources of the country were exhausted to contrive amusements for the boy. Amusements had lost their charm. He was too indifferent to them all. His parents saw an increasing languor and dulness, which heightened their alarm. The bracing air of this colder clime was expected to produce a beneficial effect ; but no benefit was received.

Helena's whole being was bound up in her child, and his failing health kept her in a constant state of alarm and anxiety. Sensitive and nervous, she had never been strong, and the dread experience through which she had passed, when she had

tasted of the bitterness of death, had left deep and abiding traces. Many gray hairs appeared already on that brow which was yet young, and lines were marked on her fair face, and the signs of grief remained. Perhaps, if Marcus had recovered his old spirit, and life had been joyous—if she had gone back to perfect peace and liberty, unalloyed by anxiety—then she might have recovered from the terrors of that eventful night. But new griefs succeeded to old ones, and the thin pale face of Marcus, which haunted her night and day, was worse than the catacombs.

As the boy failed, the mother knew that she, too, was failing. She told no one. She feared to add to her husband's grief by telling him. She hid the secret in her heart, and that heart ached for him who was to be so bereaved. She knew that her life and that of Marcus would have the same course.

Often this thought came vividly before her as she looked at Marcus, and then she would clasp him passionately to her heart, and exclaim: "O sweet boy!" but she said no more, for she dared not utter the thought that was in her mind.

But as his face grew thinner, and his form more slight, and his eyes more lustrous, so did hers, as though there were some subtle sympathy between these two which bound each to a common fate.

To all this Labeo was not blind. He could see it all as he looked mournfully upon the change which time made in each, and marked how both declined together. He saw it all. He knew what Helena's secret was, which she in her love would conceal.

At first he struggled against it, and tried hard to disbelieve it, to reason away his fears. In vain. The mother and son were there before him to show him what was coming. He tried to hope, but hope grew fainter and fainter, till at last all hope died out, and he was forced to struggle with the terror that lay full before him.

For Marcus at last grew so weak that he could walk about no longer.

Then Labeo carried him about in the open air ; tenderly, lovingly, while his heart was breaking, and in his tones, which were always tender and loving, there came a new tenderness, a passion of love, and a deep yearning over this idol of his heart. The strong man carried the pale, dying boy about the garden all the day long, or sat holding him in his arms, gazing upon him with speechless love. He was avaricious about his boy ; he wished to lose not a single word or a single look. He treasured them all up within his memory.

Thus, while the father carried his boy about the garden, Helena used to look at them from a distance, and think such thoughts as she would not wish to tell.

And Labeo used to look away from the wasted form of his son to the slender figure of that other dear one, and mark her wan face and hollow cheeks, and wonder whether he could bear all that was impending.

For he knew it—he knew it. Before him he saw a black cloud without one ray of light. Bereavement, twofold, unendurable, not to be thought of—anguish that breaks the heart, and sorrow without a name. And the gloom of that future darkened all his life, so that each succeeding day brought a worse fear, and drew him nearer and nearer to despair.

But as Marcus grew weaker in body, his soul grew stronger. His spirit rose, and he tried to comfort his mother and console her : but most of all his thoughts and his heart turned to his father.

His whole nature had been affectionate. The chief motive of his nature was love, and now, when the world passed away and life lost its glow, his love arose over all and centred itself in his father.

Perhaps it was the pride which he had always felt for that

father ; for Labeo had always been to Marcus his highest ideal of manhood—such a one as he could most admire and revere—such a one as he himself had once hoped to be.

Perhaps he thought that his mother needed it not so much ; perhaps he saw that the grief would be less, since it would be endured for a shorter time. She would be delivered from her sorrow, while he must linger on in his misery without a comfort or a support.

It was this that made him return with equal fondness all the affection that his father lavished on him, and while he looked on the face of his son, the son would turn to the father a fixed gaze of love ; he would seek for caresses, and make his father hold his hand ; by all these acts expressing what words were weak to tell.

Whether by night or by day Labeo could not leave his son. In his sleep he watched over him as though by his presence he sought to shield him from the approach of danger.

Time passed, and the weakness increased, until at last the father could no longer carry the boy in his arms, but had to watch over him in his chamber, and then all the life of Labeo was passed in the room where Marcus lay.

And still, as the body wasted, the spirit strengthened : there was less of earth, but more of heaven. The words that he spoke were not the words of a child. He talked on things of which Labeo knew nothing ; but the words vibrated through all his being, and were treasured up in his memory, and called to mind in after-years.

These were some simple words that were most frequently on his lips, spoken in a weak but earnest voice, and with a glance of deep love that death itself could not shake.

“ Father, we will all be there at last.”

“ Father, I will be there first.”

“ Father, we will meet again.”

Then Labeo looked into his own soul, and asked himself,—

Did he know this as his son knew it? Was he sure of it? That boy was. But was he? And he knew that he was not.

Beside the father was the mother, with the same anxiety, keeping watch in her feebleness over the same couch, and only desiring life for this, that she might live long enough to console the father when the blow should first fall—holding the same grief but not the same despair; for now, at the slow but sure approach of the end, the very blackness of darkness gathered around Labeo, and his soul was filled with desolation.

Yet every hour that took away part of that boy's life took away an equal part of the life of that mother.

In the midst of this, Marcus used to speak his artless words about heaven and God, as though he spoke of that with which every one was familiar. Yet Labeo knew nothing of these things, and the feelings of Marcus were a mystery to him. The One so loved by Helena and by his son was not known to himself, and not believed in. In the time of his prosperity and happiness he had turned away, and now, in the time of his grief, he stood afar off.

"Father," said Marcus, "we will meet again. Will we not, father? Say, father."

And the father, in his anguish, kissed the white lips of his son, but could find no answer, till Marcus urged him so that he had to say something.

"Oh, my boy, may the great God grant it!"

"He will—he will—my father."

It was with such words as these that this fair young spirit took its flight to a purer world, and a holier companionship, and a diviner love, leaving behind the memory of his dying words, to be treasured up in that father's broken heart, and retained through years, till, like precious seed, they should bring forth fruit at last.

It was early morning when Marcus left them. They had watched him all night. He lay silent, breathing fast, held in

the arms of his father, his head supported on that father's breast, who, all unnerved, trembled like a child, while the fierce throbbings of his heart bore witness to his agony.

Dawn came, and the boy opened his eyes.

"Father," said he.

"O my son!" groaned Labeo, in a voice of despair.

"Kiss me, father."

And these were his last words. And as the father pressed his lips on the cold brow, that loving spirit, with all its tender grace and beauty, gently passed away. A smile irradiated the marble features of the dead. Labeo closed the eyes that looked on him with such love to the last, and gently placed on the couch that form in which he saw the ruin of all hope and all affection and all happiness.

Then all his grief, resisted and struggled against for months, rushed upon him and overmastered him. He staggered back and fell to the floor.

Loving hearts cared for him. He revived and came back to his living grief, but only to find another sorrow.

Cineas had come from Rome when he first heard that the sickness of Marcus was alarming, and was now in this mourning household. He saw a grief beyond his powers to console. What had he to say? Nothing. Helena had more to say. It was she who spoke, as she hung over Labeo, who, though roused to sense, was yet bewildered and crushed by his great sorrow. Labeo sat as one who heard nothing. He looked at vacancy. The only sound that he heard was the last words of that one who now lay there, lost to his heart for ever.

So he thought, and if that one thought took form, it was this,—that his love, his idol, his darling was gone, gone for ever and for ever; and what was life? Could he live after this? Dare he live, and meet what was before him? He thought of the dagger of that old Sulpicius, which once before he had seized when that same son was borne away.

Sweet and low, amid that madness and that despair, came the sound of Helena's voice.

"He said we would all meet again. And we may all have that meeting. Where he has gone there we may all go, if we will.

"He is not dead. He lives. He has left his form behind, as we might leave our garments, but he himself now stands among the redeemed.

"This is the glory of the religion of Christ, that little children can know him, and feel his love in life and in death. He invited them to him. He said that heaven was made up of such. Of such is the kingdom of heaven. And who is fit for heaven, if Marcus is not?

"He is in light and life eternal, while we are in darkness and death. He looks down upon our grief from heaven. We may all meet him there if we will."

But Labeo heard nothing. All this seemed mere useless words. Cineas heard, and recalled the words of Paul in the catacombs, over the burial of Clymene. His philosophy had nothing for consolation in sorrow, but here was something that well might bring comfort and peace. Did it not? There sat the bereaved mother; but though natural grief was strong, the faith of the soul triumphed over nature. She looked away from the inanimate corpse, and saw her true son in heaven, in glory.

But Helena herself had no need to mourn. Her separation from her boy was not to be long, and she knew it. She knew it as she stood looking at the loved remains when they placed them in the tomb, when the faint beatings of her heart gave solemn warning to her of the coming hour; and she thought that in a little time she, too, would lie there, and mourners would tenderly and tearfully deposit her ashes in their last resting-place.

She moved about feebly, yet still struggled to keep up as long

as possible. But after the burial of Marcus she rose no more. After that, she too sank upon the bed of sickness, and husband and brother had to undergo another bereavement.

Worn out in body and in mind, by calamities, by grief, and by long attendance on Marcus, in which she nerved herself to the worst for a time, but only to feel a worse reaction, there was no hope for her now. It was impossible to save her. She must die.

Labeo said nothing. He had foreseen it; he had known it when his boy died. He had then known despair, and had suffered the extreme of anguish. He could feel no more. There lay before him the partner of his life, loved tenderly and faithfully, and he knew that she too was about to leave him. There were times when he yielded to his tenderness or to his grief, but for the most part he sat there rigid, stony, defying Heaven.

But for Cineas the sight of Helena thus passing away was terrible. His mother had died in his childhood. His father's death was the only thing in all his life that had ever troubled him. That death occurred when he was at an age when the feelings are keen, but sorrow, if deep, is short-lived. Here, then, came a sorrow over his soul, and he felt that it would be carried to his grave.

For in childhood, and boyhood, and early manhood, Helena and he had been inseparable, uniting in all tastes and all enjoyments with that strange spiritual sympathy which drew both together, and made one the counterpart of the other. He loved Helena as he never loved any other human being. All the sweetest associations of life were blended with her. No love could be stronger than this, or more enduring.

Helena knew the agony that lay before that brother's heart, how he would miss her, and no more find one who understood himself and his aspirations; how in his clinging affection he would cherish her memory, and make the companion of his

childhood the brightest memory of his later years. But to him it would be nothing but a memory.

Now, on that bed from which she expected to rise no more, her soul stood in the presence of the other world, and seemed to see something of its majesty. She spoke now as though she saw what was before her. On Labeo's ears her words fell unheeded; but Cineas heard all, and understood all, and his whole nature thrilled at some of those words which she spake.

All referred to Christ.

"He is truth. Seek him, and you will find peace.

"He is the only one worth seeking after. Find him, and you gain immortality. He gives eternal life with himself in heaven.

"Oh, Cineas, you have learned all that philosophy can ever tell you, but there is something which you do not know, and you feel the need of it. You crave it, you seek after it. I have found it all in the religion of Christ.

"You know all about God except one thing, and that one thing you can never find out except from Christ. It is the one thing that he teaches. I knew all else before; I only learned from him the one thing,—it is that God loves me. For I know it, I know it, and I love him who first loved me.

"He takes away all fear. Can I fear to die? He before whom I must appear is my Saviour, my Redeemer. He loves me, and I love him. I shall see him, and shall dwell in his presence for ever.

"Cineas, philosophy can give courage, in the face of death, to a philosopher, and make him die calmly; but Christ can take away all fear of death from weak women and from little children. It is his love that does this.

"And now my soul clings to him. He supports me. I love him, and have no fear. Oh, that you had this love! you would then know that all you seek for is found in him."

Such were the words which Helena spoke at intervals, not continuously, with frequent pauses from weakness; and never had Cineas heard words that so affected his heart.

He thought within himself that her pure spirit already saw things unutterable, and that her bright intellect understood the dark mystery of death.

It did not need this new scene to show him that death had no terror to the follower of Christ. He had already learned this from many who had died calmly, murmuring with their last breath the name of their Redeemer. Nor did he think much of mere courage or calmness of themselves in the face of death. For himself, he felt that he could die calmly. Seneca had died nobly; Petronius, joyously. But this he saw, that the courage and the joy of Helena were far different from anything which this world could give. They were more than sublime;—they were divine.

As he had desired before to be a Christian, so now he desired it still more. There were difficulties in the way, the cause of which he knew not yet, but was destined to find out one day; and so, as Helena spoke, she seemed glorified in his eyes, and he looked and listened as one might listen to an angel, and longed to be able to share that exalted sentiment, and speak in that heavenly language.

So the days passed, and Helena faded away speaking less and less, in her last thoughts blending together her husband and her brother.

Then delirium came. Her mind wandered back to her happy girlhood. Again she rambled with Cineas amid the beautiful scenes of her home, or sat and talked the hours away under the plane-trees. Her voice murmured the words of old songs, the songs of childhood, the sweet, the never-forgotten; and Cineas, as he listened to that wandering fancy, felt all his own thoughts go back to that bright season, and a longing, yearning homesickness grew over his heart. Oh, to break the

barriers of time, and go back in the years to such a youth amid such happiness! But youth had gone, and, with Helena, happiness also would go. Could he but take the feeling of Helena into his heart, and look up to heaven as she loved to look, and call that his home, as she loved to call it. Then the past might yield in charm to the future.

Strange it was that in her delirium she did not know her husband, but always knew Cineas. It gave a mournful consolation to his mourning heart to know that the one whom he had always loved best of all on earth, could thus forget all others but him. Thus the memories of childhood outlast all others, and in delirium, while the present fades, the past lives.

"Take me away, Cineas, away. I want to go home. Why do you keep me here?"

She looked with a strange imploring expression as she said this. It was her Athenian home, the home of her childhood, to which she wished to return. She did not know where she was, and did not recognize this room or this house as hers.

"Will you not go home soon, Cineas, and take me with you? I am frightened. What am I doing here in this strange place? Take me home. I want to go home."

Ah, poor weary spirit, thought Cineas, as he tried to soothe her. You will indeed go home, but not to Athens.

"You shall go home, O my sister!" said he.

"When?" she asked, nervously and eagerly.

"When? Soon, too soon," he murmured, as the hot tears poured from his eyes.

Home! Oh, yes! Not long did she have to remain, not long to breathe forth her sighs, and implore Cineas to take her thence. Her home was awaiting her, and she gained what she wished, for she was taken home; but it was to a diviner home, and a fairer clime, and a more radiant company than all those which dwelt in her memory—a home beyond the stars, a home eternal in the heavens.



XXXII.

Off to the Wars.

THE blow that had fallen upon the two friends overwhelmed both. Each had his own sorrows, and neither ventured to hint to the other a single word of consolation.

For some time Labeo seemed to be bewildered by his grief, and lived and moved about in a state of stupor almost. Gradually the stupor lessened, but only to make grief more keen. The gloom seemed to gather more darkly around, and every ray of light to have departed for ever.

Gradually the two friends became drawn toward each other, and though at first each had shut himself up in solitude, yet the force of sympathy brought them together. They said little or nothing. They walked over the grounds, or rode over the country, or sat in the hall, commonly in silence, saying nothing but the fewest and most customary words, and yet with all this taciturnity each looked out for the society of the other, and felt restless without it.

All else had gone ; friendship was left—the strong friendship of two noble natures, begun in boyhood, cemented and strengthened through years. Each knew the other's character to the inmost heart, and each had proved the other's fidelity. In his present grief each knew that the other suffered. The bereavement of Cineas had not been twofold, like that of Labeo, but his sensitive nature made his feelings keen and his anguish

most acute. There was a great blank in his life, and he knew not how it could ever be filled. For he had been so accustomed to rely upon Helena's sympathy, even when they were absent, that it seemed a necessity; and now, since he had lost it, he felt sensible of its value. Where again could he ever find so pure and elevated a soul, and one, too, that was so thoroughly in unison with his?

Yet there was another whose grief was not less keen than that of these—a ruder, stronger nature, whose despair showed itself in the mute agony of his face. This was Galdus.

Through the last few months he had only one thought in life, and that was Marcus. When the little boy could no longer walk about, Labeo had taken away from Galdus that charge which was so sweet to the latter; yet the father, in his deep love and sad foreboding, was not unmindful of that other strong love that lived in the stout heart of the Briton. He was allowed to have a share in the care of the sick boy, and precious were those moments when Galdus was allowed to bear so loved a burden.

When Labeo carried his son about the grounds, then Galdus followed him with his eyes, and stood ever on the watch, waiting eagerly for some opportunity of doing something, it mattered little what; but anything which he could find occasion to do afforded him the highest happiness.

When Marcus could no longer go out in the open air, then Galdus stood or walked all the time near to his room, till at last Labeo had pity on him, and allowed him to remain inside the chamber. There was in the bearing of the Briton that stoicism which is peculiar to the savage, but those who watched him saw that his fortitude often broke down, and whenever his eyes met those of Marcus, the stern rigidity of his features relaxed and softened into an expression of speechless love.

At last all was over, and Galdus stood up like the image of Despair. He remained for days, and sometimes for nights, at

the grave of his lost idol, as though his fidelity could recall the departed. His instinct of love bound him to that place where he saw the grave of that love, and while Labeo and Cineas struggled with their grief in the house, Galdus nursed his silent agony at the sepulchre. There the two friends sometimes encountered him, and saw that third grief which might rival theirs. At such times they only looked, but passed by, and spoke no word.

After a time a change came over Labeo. His first stupor passed away, but there came in its place a vivid consciousness of his painful loss. It aroused within him a violent sorrow, which found expression in curses against Heaven. It made him defiant against fate, and resentful, as though his affliction had been a wrong. The thought of his own impotence made him more passionate. But he could do nothing. There was no one on whom he could wreak revenge, and that Heaven which he cursed was out of his reach.

One morning he joined Cineas in the garden, with his face more pallid than usual, and bloodshot eyes, and a wild restlessness in his face that startled his friend.

"Cineas," said Labeo—and it was almost the first word that he had spoken to him deliberately for months—"I can stand this no longer. I will kill myself if this goes on."

Cineas looked at him in sad wonder, but said nothing.

"I have already made the attempt," said the other. "It was this morning—at dawn," he spoke at intervals. "I had passed a night which was more sleepless than usual, and my heart ached. A sudden impulse came over me. I will put an end to this at once and for ever. Why should I live if I have to live thus? And a great longing came over me for death.

"I rose and took the dagger of my ancestor, which I have always carried, and made a libation to Jupiter the Deliverer, and then stretched out my arm, so as to plunge the dagger into my heart. But"—and Labeo's voice became low and broken

with emotion—"suddenly I thought I heard a voice—not of this world—a voice that spoke to my soul only—it was *his* voice—it said, 'Father, we will meet again.'

"And the dagger dropped from my hand. O my son!" groaned Labeo, clasping his hands, "did you see me from among the stars, and come to stay my hand? I accept the omen, whether it be my own delusion or the voice of the loved. I will not die like a coward, to avoid suffering. If it were shame that was before me, then I would follow my ancestor.

"But I must put an end to this. I cannot live thus. Every day makes it worse, and I suffer more now than when the blow first fell."

"Do you feel thus, O friend of my soul?" said Cineas, in low, melancholy tones. "If so, then there is an alternative for both of us—for you and for me: let us go."

"Go! Where?"

"Away—away—anywhere away from this. To an active life, where we can forget all this, and forget ourselves. To Judea."

"Judea!" said Labeo, not quite understanding him.

"Yes," said Cineas, with a vehemence that was unusual with him. "To Judea—after the legions—to war. For war is there. The whole land has risen in rebellion, and there will be fighting such as the world has not seen since Philippi. That will force something else in our thoughts. We will follow the eagles of Rome. You shall lead your legions to victory. We will fight side by side, and scale the walls of those rock-built cities that are perched on the summits of the mountains. Then, if we want death, it will come soon enough, I doubt not; and if life is desirable, it will be a life with thoughts that are more endurable than those which we have here. The war has begun, and armies have already marched there to avenge the defeat of Cestius. I heard about it yesterday in the town."

Then Cineas, fearful that Labeo might hesitate, spoke of his old

legion, which had gone there, and of those old tent-companions with whom Labeo had already shared the perils of campaigning and the stern excitement of war. At the sound of his insidious eloquence Labeo felt all his old military ardour stir within his breast; recollections that had long slumbered awakened into fierce and active life; all the soldier was aroused within him; he recalled the glorious old days of the campaign and the fervid heat of the battle; visions of Roman standards, and gleaming arms and white tents, arose before him; his eyes sparkled, his nostrils quivered, and his heart beat fast.

"Away; let us go," he cried, interrupting Cineas. "That is the true life for a man and a Roman. Why do I stand here whimpering like a child, when I have all this before me? Let us hasten. We will go together. You are not a soldier, Cineas, but you are a brave man, and you know the use of arms, and I will show you how to lead Roman armies."

"I will go with you, and with no other, in life or in death, to the end of the world. If we die, let us die nobly, like men; in battle, and not in our beds."

At the stimulus of this new idea the two friends hastened their departure. Galdus was soon informed of their determination. They asked him to accompany them.

The idea had as much power over the heart of the Briton as it had exerted over Labeo.

"You are going to war?" said he.

"Yes."

The eyes of Galdus glowed.

"And I am free?"

"As free as I am."

"Then I will go too, but not with you. O Labeo, there are other wars for me. I am a Briton, I will not fight under the standards of Rome.

"I am a Briton, and I am in the land of my fathers. I hear the voices of my fathers in my dreams, and they call on me for

vengeance. I have forgotten them, and made my ears deaf to their cries: I hear them now, and I will obey.

"Over all our British hills the tribes are yet dwelling, and in the north they are all free. If I am a free man I will live my free life among them.

"The one whom I adored as my god has left me," he continued, with a faltering voice. "What is left to me but to go back to my old gods? My people want me. They need defenders yet. I will fight for them, and die for them."

Labeo said nothing. He thought that Galdus would go back to his tribe, and throw away his life in some hopeless insurrection. But he understood the man, and did not try to change his resolution.

"I will not wait till you go," said Galdus. "I will leave first, and at once. O father of him whom I adored, let me embrace you for the last time, then leave me at the sepulchre, and before dawn I will go."

The Briton then embraced Labeo, and turned away. All that night he lay near the tomb of Marcus. In the morning they looked for him, but he had gone.

Labeo and Cineas did not delay long. A few days completed their short preparations, and then they quitted the house, and soon looked back on the white shores of Britain as they sped over the waves.

The incidents of the journey distracted their thoughts, and prevented them from brooding over their grief so incessantly as they had done.

Soon they reached Rome.

Then Labeo embraced his mother and told her of his determination. The venerable lady acquiesced, for she thought it the most natural thing in the world. Sympathizing with her son in his deep grief, she was glad that there was an opportunity for him to escape from it in the cares of an active campaign.

Before he left, he made final arrangements for the comfort of

his mother. He made Julius the overseer of his estate, which to the young centurion was a great step upwards in the paths of life, and urged him to be careful for the comfort of Sulpicia. Lydia was already dear to the venerable lady, for she had learned to love her when she was living at the villa, and with her companionship Labeo felt that his mother's happiness would be secure.

Then he thought of that faithful servant whose fidelity had already been proved in many cases for many years, and as all his preparations now were final, he determined to see Isaac free.

When he announced this to the Jew, he was surprised at the result. A flush of emotion passed over his face, and was instantly succeeded by a deathly pallor. The Jew fell at Labeo's feet.

"May the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob give unto you his richest blessings and prolong your life, and make all your hopes and your desires fulfilled."

Labeo interrupted him, and assured him that he had already done enough to deserve it, and the gratitude which he had shown was a rich reward for this freedom which he had given. "But why this joy? I thought your life here was happy. You always seemed content."

"Most noble Labeo. The exile is never happy or content. His heart is breaking always. To a Jew, his country is dearer than to any other. And for me, day and night have I wept when I remembered Zion. But I have trusted in my God, and he is the rock of my salvation. He has heard my prayer. Praised be his name."

"But you cannot go back to your country now."

Isaac cast down his eyes.

"There is war there."

"I had rather die there than live elsewhere," replied Isaac.

"Will you go there?" asked Labeo, in surprise.

"You will not prevent me?" cried Isaac, imploringly.

"Prevent you? never, if you wish to go."

Isaac raised his head and said nothing, but there was that in his heaving breast and flashing eyes which expressed unutterable things. Labeo did not understand it then. He found out the meaning afterwards.





XXXIII.

Nero in Greece.

BEFORE Cineas left Rome for Britain, Nero had experienced an extraordinary revival of his artistic and literary tastes. For some time he had divided his time between voluptuous excesses and ambitious schemes for enlarging the bounds of the empire, when a circumstance occurred which turned all his thoughts in another direction.

A deputation was sent from the cities of Greece, which brought to Nero the victor's crown for excellence in music. No conceivable thing could have given greater pleasure to him than this. It was unexpected, and made him beside himself with joy. He received the deputies with the warmest welcome, invited them to his table, and bestowed upon them every honour that he could think of. He talked with them in his usual strain about art and literature ; he sang to them, and they listened with rapture, and gave him the greatest applause. As Greeks, and as guests of Cæsar, they were not sparing in their adulation, and their delicate flattery filled him with delight. He, in his turn, regarded them with admiration on account of their taste, which made them so appreciate his fine talents, and in his enthusiasm neglected all other enjoyments and all public business. The Greeks humoured him to the top of his bent, and at length urged him earnestly to visit Greece and give the inhabitants of that country an opportunity of hearing his divine voice, telling

him that it was not right for him to hide his splendid genius in a country like Italy, where he could in no way be appreciated, and assuring him that if the Greeks could only witness his marvellous accomplishments, they would give him the highest prizes in all their games.

The prospect of such brilliant fame as this dazzled Nero completely, and drove everything else out of his thoughts. He determined to visit Greece, and began to make his preparations. These were carried out on the most magnificent scale. An army of noble youths, five thousand in number, headed by Tigellinus, was chosen to accompany him. In addition to these there was a vast number of all the most dissolute and worthless characters of the city. But this host of attendants did not carry arms; they took with them musical instruments only, so that all the accompaniments of the expedition might be in keeping. A thousand waggons carried supplies, and these were drawn by mules which were shod with silver. All the horses were decorated with the richest trappings, and a striking feature in the display was presented by a great number of African slaves, all richly dressed, and with costly bracelets on their arms.

These preparations took up some time, but at length he landed in Greece. Then he made arrangements necessary for the success of his enterprise. The games of Greece, according to immemorial custom, took place usually on different years, but Nero could not wait for the regular period of their celebration. He therefore issued orders that all should be holden during his visit, and that each should wait till his arrival at the place. Jealous of the fame of those men who had gained prizes in former ages, he ordered all their statues to be destroyed; yet he invited all the most eminent artists then living to enter into competition in every department of art, or of gymnastic exercise, whether poetry, or music, or running, or chariot-driving.

Then he began that marvellous tour through Greece, visiting

city after city, and exhibiting himself to the people. At every exhibition care was taken that the applause which was expected should be forthcoming. His own immediate followers were distributed among the audience, so as to direct the plaudits of the rest. The applause was not wanting. Every exhibition of the emperor was a brilliant triumph, and Nero gave himself up completely to the intoxication of the hour. The competitors who appeared confessed themselves vanquished by the superior genius of the master of the world, and one unhappy man who had the folly to dispute the prize was despatched by the lictors in sight of the assemblage. A slight was punished as treason. Vespasian happened to be present on one occasion, and fell asleep during the performance. He was banished from the Court by the indignant emperor, and might have perished for his bad taste had not the Jewish war required his services.

While the people gave their applause, they had to undergo a painful struggle with that keen sense of the ridiculous which distinguished the Greeks. They saw this performer make his appearance with all the affectation of a professional favourite, straining his voice, rolling his eyes, rising on his toes, losing his breath, and exerting himself till his naturally red complexion turned crimson and purple. He appeared in all kinds of exercises: now as a musician, now as a tragedian, and at another time as a charioteer. On one of these last exhibitions at the great Olympic games he was thrown from his car, and had to leave the course unfinished. He gained the prize, however, all the same.

Thus he won his triumphs, and the venerable honours of the Nemean, the Pythian, the Isthmian, and the Olympic games were all heaped upon him. In all his performances he gained eighteen hundred different crowns. Of all these he sent back to Rome the most glowing accounts. The senate, as usual, passed a vote of thanks to the gods, and made the days of his victories public festivals.

Yet it was not all triumph even to Nero. Amid all his festivities it was possible for this man to suffer sometimes from the stings of a guilty conscience. He carried for years the terrible memory of his mother's murder, and confessed once that he was haunted by her ghost, which followed him with whips and scorpions like one of the Furies. On account of these pangs of conscience, he did not dare to visit Athens, for there he knew he would see the ancient temple and enclosure of the Awful Goddesses. Sparta was also unapproachable to him, since the laws of Lycurgus singled out such crimes as his for conspicuous punishment. He did not dare to visit the Eleusinian mysteries, for the crier there warned off all murderers and parricides. Such superstitious fears as these kept him thus away from those very places to which his tastes would have first led him.

During his expedition his extravagance was without limit, and in order to satisfy his demands worse oppression arose in Rome. Those whom he left behind to govern in his absence were only too glad of the opportunity of practising tyranny on their own account. Enormous sums of money were raised by means of the greatest cruelty and extortion, and Rome became a scene of plunder and bloodshed. The richest and most illustrious men of Rome were marked out as victims, and ordered to despatch themselves—a common order in these times, which no one ever presumed to disobey. But Nero did not restrict his cruelty to Rome. His love for Greece, and everything Greek, did not at all deter him from plundering the country of his love. The very cities which had listened to his voice, and given their applause, were made the victims of his rapacity, and the most eminent citizens were banished or put to death, so that their property might be seized.

Meantime the state of Rome began to grow alarming. The people found the tyranny of Nero's subordinates unendurable, and loud and fierce clamours arose. Despatches were sent to

the emperor warning him of the state of things, and urging his return. Nero, however, by this time had been excited by a new scheme, which was to cut a canal through the Isthmus of Corinth. He therefore remained longer, so as to insure the accomplishment of this work, and gain by it immortal glory. While seeing about this, he still continued his public exhibitions, and divided his time between bloody tragedies in real life, and false ones on the stage.

At last, however, danger increased everywhere. Rome was on the point of insurrection. The flame began to spread elsewhere. The regent Helius left Rome in alarm, and hurrying over to Greece, came to Nero at Corinth. The report which he brought back rendered a further stay in Greece impossible, and Nero was forced to quit the scene of his glory, after having been there about a year.

Nero arrived in Naples first, and there made a triumphant entry, which was worthy of the marvellous genius who had carried off so many prizes. Other cities repeated the scene of triumph, and at length all splendours culminated at Rome. Before him there passed a long procession, which carried the victorious crowns and wreaths which he had won, and held aloft inscriptions which proclaimed the splendid genius of the great Roman who had conquered all the Greeks in their own special domain. The city resounded with songs of praise and sacred hymns, directed to Apollo, the presiding deity of music and poetry. After the long procession there appeared the triumphal car, which once was used by Augustus. There sat Nero, and by his side Diodorus the musician. Flowers were strewn in the way before the emperor. Victims were offered up, and the smoke of the sacrifice and of incense arose, and the streets resounded with the shouts and acclamations of those who sought to express by fitting cries the most appropriate welcome to such a victor.

Now, amid all this, there was one thing which filled Nero

with anger and resentment, and that was the absence of Cineas. He had expected that he would have been the first to accompany him to Greece, to share his triumphs and behold his accomplishments. Instead of that, he had never made his appearance, nor even sent an excuse. In an expedition of this kind Cineas was all-important. The respect which Nero felt for his splendid attainments increased his desire that he should be present, and aggravated his disappointment at his absence. At first he thought that this absence was owing to the jealousy of Tigellinus, and angrily charged his favourite with the offence; but from the representations of the latter he learned that this was not the case.

Amid the excitement of his tour through Greece, he made no inquiries after Cineas; but still, to the very last, thought that the Athenian would make his appearance. He sincerely believed that Cineas was losing the highest enjoyment of which he was capable, in not hearing his own divine voice; and often, when the theatre rang with the acclamations of thirty thousand voices, he thought to himself,—Oh, if Cineas were here!

But month after month passed away, and still Cineas came not, and his absence grew more and more unaccountable. At first Nero felt no resentment, for he thought that Cineas would be sufficiently punished by learning the full extent of all that he had missed. But soon resentment came, and the thought grew up in the mind of Nero that he was slighted, till the thought became positive suspicion, and suspicion deepened into conviction. Then his rage knew no bounds, and his soul was filled by one all-consuming desire for vengeance.

Not till he arrived at Rome did he make inquiries after Cineas. He then learned all the facts,—that Cineas had gone to Britain, and then, returning with Labeo, had set out with the latter for Judea.

This completed the rage of Nero. Cineas had known that he was in Greece, and yet had chosen to go to Judea. For

what? For idle curiosity. Certainly not for fighting. And he had proved himself indifferent to the genius of Cæsar. It was a slight, an insult. He should die!

The very first thing that he did was to send off a command for the arrest of Cineas and his transportation to Rome for trial.

“He shall die this time,” said Nero to Tigellinus. “I will try and see if death cannot be made terrible even to him.”





XXXIV.

The End of Nero.



HE applause which Nero had heard in the streets of Rome was destined to be the last that was offered to that mixture of tragedy and comedy which composed his life. Hardly had he returned, when he discovered a most dangerous conspiracy. This he crushed, and then, thinking that his future was secured, he determined to leave the dangers of the capital, and enjoy himself in a safer place. He therefore went to Naples, and gave himself up for a time to his passions and his music. There he found everything to his taste. His soldiers could overawe the populace of an inferior town. The beauty of the surrounding country gratified him. The scenery of Naples was always agreeable to him, and the delights of Baiæ were close at hand.

But his enjoyment here was only for a short time. The whole world was roused, and rose up to free itself from an oppression which was not only terrible but also contemptible. For some time there had been trouble in Gaul, and here the first movements took place. There was a man named Vindex, who was descended from the old kings of Aquitania, who now came forward prominently as the deliverer of a world. Actuated either by hatred of tyranny, or by personal ambition, or by both, he determined to cast down Nero from the throne which he had disgraced. He wrote letters to the governors of the surrounding provinces, and among others to Galba, who com-

manded in Spain, proposing the destruction of Nero. Galba was the most powerful and the most eminent of these. He belonged to the Sulpician family, and was therefore, to some extent, related to Labeo. He was a well-known soldier, and his name was among the most eminent of the time. He received the proposals of Vindex with much irresolution, and neither accepted them nor declined them. But the other governors all refused to join Vindex, either from fear or loyalty, and sent his letters to Nero.

Vindex, however, pursued his design. He went round among the Gauls and aroused them. Soon a league was formed, and he found himself at the head of a powerful army.

Galba remained cautious and irresolute. At length he called an assembly of the people, at New Carthage, and found them so hostile to Nero that they saluted him as emperor on the spot.

Nero heard all, but tried to shut his eyes to the danger. He used to talk for a short time each day to his friends about the affairs of state, and then, finding the subject extremely unpleasant, he would take them off to play to them, or exhibit his fine artistic talents. He was particularly proud of a machine which played music by the action of water, and jocularly remarked that he intended to exhibit it on the stage, if Vindex would let him.

But gradually the news grew more and more alarming. Galba had at length decided against him without reserve. Vindex was growing more powerful every day, and had scattered incendiary proclamations everywhere, in which Nero was called "Ænobarbus," and a "vile comedian." The name Ænobarbus belonged to Nero's father, and was particularly hateful, but it was nothing as an epithet compared with the other words, "vile comedian." When he first heard it he was at a banquet, and in his rage he leaped up, overthrowing the banqueting-

table. He at once wrote to the senate, and to stimulate them still more he added, "Judge, O Conscript Fathers, of the insolence of Vindex. . . . He has dared to say that I have a bad voice, and play ill on the lyre." The senate at once prepared to exert the power of the state. They proclaimed Galba a public enemy, and set a reward on the head of Vindex.

Orders were given to different generals to march against the rebels. Among others, Virginus Rufus had received such commands, and prepared to obey them. His own soldiers hated Nero, and offered him the empire. Whatever were his ultimate objects, he determined, however, to march against Vindex, and this he accordingly did. The armies came together and stood opposite each other, when Vindex requested an interview. The interview took place, and Virginus made some kind of agreement with the rebel chief, and began to withdraw his army, when suddenly the soldiers, misunderstanding the movement, and animated by hate to the Gauls, made an attack of their own accord. The battle soon became general. The Gauls were defeated, and fled, and Vindex, in dejection, threw himself upon his sword.

Galba heard of this with despair, but Nero was triumphant. As the tidings had grown more and more alarming, Nero had become conscious of his perilous position, and had sent out commands to different armies, to recall them and concentrate them against the common enemy. He had also left Naples and returned to Rome. Then the news came of the destruction of Vindex and his army, and the emperor, in a transport of joy, took his harp, and tuning it, burst forth into songs of triumph.

But all the world was now aroused. All Rome was in a state of discontent, and ripe for rebellion. Nero, in his self-complacency, was quite unconscious that he had given cause for hatred, but rather liked to think of himself as a most admirable and rather popular character, guilty perhaps of one or two

crimes, but on the whole worthy of admiration. He considered that his triumphs in Greece of themselves constituted an unequalled claim on the gratitude of the people. But the courtiers thought differently. They could see the impending storm, and of them all none saw it so clearly as Tigellinus. This man, true to his character, when he saw the declining fortunes of his master, determined not merely to desert him, but to accelerate his ruin. In company with another, Nymphidius by name, they formed a plot, and succeeded in exciting rebellion among the Prætorian guards. They espoused the cause of Galba, and by means of bribes and dazzling promises seduced the allegiance of these men. Soon all was accomplished, and Nero's strongest reliance had fallen away.

Nero, in the meantime, was sensible of the universal disaffection. The senate exhibited it, the people, and the guards. Fear entered into his soul. Terror and the desire for vengeance actuated him by turns. He thought at one time of setting the city on fire again, and letting loose the wild beasts of the amphitheatre among the populace, while, in the confusion, he would fly to Egypt. This was discovered and reported publicly, and served to increase the public exasperation.

Tigellinus and Nymphidius then saw that the time had come. But they were unwilling to go forward prominently, and chose rather to work upon the fears of Nero. They therefore sought him, with dejected countenances, and told him that all was lost; that the people and the guards were on the point of rising; that his only safety lay in flight, and that he had not a moment to lose.

Despair now came to the falling monarch. There was no longer any hope of retrieving his fortunes. The soldiers whom he had recalled were in part out of reach, and in part disaffected. He looked everywhere for help, but found none. He wandered about the palace, not knowing where to fly or what to do. Then the memories of his crimes recurred to his

mind, and above all the foul murder of his dearest relatives. Still, even in his anguish, the ruling passion of his life was visible, and when he gave utterance to his despair, he did so in a line from the *Œdipus* of Sophocles, which he used to speak on the stage,—

“My father, mother, wife, they bid me die!”

He tried to get a ship to carry him to Egypt, and ordered one to be prepared at Ostia. In vain. No one would obey his orders. One of the soldiers, seeing his terror, quoted a line of Virgil to him,—

“And is it then so dread a thing to die?”

He then tried to take poison which had been prepared for him, but could not muster sufficient courage. He went to his room, and threw himself on his couch. His anguish was terrible. He called for some one to despatch him; but finding no one willing, he exclaimed, “My friends desert me, and I cannot find an enemy.” Then he rushed toward the Tiber, with the intention of drowning himself; then he came back again, unable to do so, and resolved to sail to Spain, and beg his life from Galba. But no ship would take him to Spain. Confused and bewildered, he thought over scores of plans, but none were feasible. He thought of going forth dressed as a suppliant, and using his well-known eloquence in a pathetic appeal to the people; but the fear of that people’s fury deterred him. There in his palace stood the emperor of the world, with no enemy in sight, but conscious that all the world was now his enemy, without any hope of flight or escape.

“Is there no hiding-place, where I may have time to think about what I may do?” he cried.

One of his freedmen, named Phaon, offered to take him to a place a few miles away from the city, where he could hide for a time. Nero eagerly accepted the offer. He hurried off, without shoes, without robes, and with nothing but his tunic.

He threw an old cloak over him as a disguise, and covered his face so as not to be recognized. Three others besides Phaon accompanied him.

This was the way in which he passed his last night.

At daybreak the Prætorian guards met and proclaimed Galba. The senate confirmed their nomination. They then declared Nero a public enemy, and condemned him to death according to the rigorous laws of the old republic.

Meanwhile, Nero hurried off to Phaon's villa. As he rode, he heard the shouts that arose from the Prætorian camp. A labourer in a field by the roadside started as they passed, and said, "See, these men are pursuing Nero." Further on a dead body lay in the road, at the sight of which his horse started. Arriving at a distance from the house, they stopped the horses, and dismounting, crossed a field covered with rushes. Phaon then wished to conceal Nero in a sand-pit till he prepared a subterranean passage into the house. But Nero refused, for he said that would be burying himself alive. A hole was soon made in the lower part of the wall of the house, and Nero crept through. He was led to a dirty room, and laid himself down on a mean bed, with a tattered coverlet thrown over him. They brought here some bread, but the sight of it made him sick ; and the only water which they could get was foul in the extreme. Of this, however, he tasted a little.

All saw that concealment or safety was impossible. After a time they told Nero this, and advised him to kill himself. This was his only escape from the vengeance of his enemies. He knew this well, but death was terrible, and he tried to postpone it as long as possible.

Before leaving Rome, Phaon had arranged with one of his servants to bring the news of the city. While they were waiting, the messenger came, bringing some documents. Nero seized them eagerly, and read the proclamation of the senate, in which he was to be punished by the old republican law.

“What kind of death is that?” he asked. “What is the ancient custom?”

Phaon at first hesitated, but at length, being urged, he replied,—

“By the law of the republic, the man who suffers death as a public enemy has his head fastened between two stakes, entirely naked, and is thus beaten to death by the lictor’s rods.”

Nero shuddered, and said nothing. Then he drew two daggers which he had brought with him, and stood up brandishing one in each hand. Then he tried the points of each, after which he extended his arms once more, and stood for a moment summoning up all his resolution. All who were present expected that he would strike himself at that moment to the heart.

But Nero, after a few moments, calmly put back both daggers into their sheaths, and turning to one of the attendants, said,—

“Sing the funeral dirge, and offer the last rites to your friend.”

The one whom he addressed sang the dirge, and Nero listened with evident emotion. Then there was a silence.

At last Nero cried,—

“Why will not one of you kill himself, and show me how to die?”

None of them, however, complied with this invitation, but sat looking at the floor.

Then Nero folded his arms, and looking at each one burst into tears.

But after a while he started up and said,—

“Nero, Nero, this is infamy! You linger in disgrace; this is not the time for sorrowful emotions; the time demands manly courage.”

But the courage which he desired did not seem to come, and he stood irresolute, now fumbling at his daggers, and now pacing up and down the small chamber.

At last he stopped and looked fiercely at his attendants.

“You,” said he, “are cowards and traitors. If you were not you would show me how to die. Oh, if there were one here whom I have known. For I have known a man, and only one in all my life, who laughed at death. Oh, if he were here! Cineas! Cineas! where are you now? Why did you forsake your friend? You at least have no complaint against me. O Cineas, if you were but here, how well you could show me the path to death! Alas! what an artist dies in me!”

While he was speaking, a sound arrested his attention. It was well known. It was the sound of a troop of horse. They were in pursuit.

Nero started. He shuddered in his fear. But fear could not destroy his ruling passion. It was not his words, but the words of Homer that burst from him,—

“The sound of rapid rushing steeds is striking on my ear.”

Seizing one of his daggers, he mustered all his courage, and plunged it in his throat. One of the attendants lent his aid to a second blow. It was a mortal wound. Nero fell back dying. They lifted him on the couch.

Not long after, the pursuers, who had by some means or other learned his hiding-place, entered the house, and rushed into the room headed by a centurion. The centurion tried to stop the flow of blood.

Nero languidly raised his eyes.

“Too late,” he said; and then added, in a scarce audible voice, “Is this your fidelity?”

The next instant all was over.

He lay dead, but in death still terrible, for the impress of his fierce passions yet remained to awe the beholders. The mastery of those passions by which he had been governed for years had left its impress on his features. His face, which in youth had not been unpleasing, had become terrible and fierce in its expression, and even in death the ferocity remained, and struck terror into those who stood near.



XXXV.

J u d e a .



WHILE the armies of the West were thus rebelling against the emperor, the armies of the East were putting down a rebellion.

Vespasian left Nero in Greece, and wielded the strength of Rome in Judea: He encountered no common foe. The Jews were a warlike people, brave and resolute, and they were defending their own country. That country was formed by nature for defence. Whatever plains it had were surrounded by mountains, which acted as a bulwark against the invader, where brave men, although undisciplined, could make a heroic defence, and often keep an army at bay. Among the mountains there were passes which no invader could penetrate without a most severe struggle, and stout-hearted men were there who were ready to make every pass another Thermopylæ.

These men had something more than the common bravery of a valorous race. They were inspired by a great idea. Every man believed that God was on his side; he called to mind the glories of the past, when that God had interposed to save them, and had enabled them to overcome enemies as terrible as the Romans. The sacred Psalms, which formed part of their religious service, commemorated the national triumphs won in the past, and no man who sang them could doubt that they would be repeated in the future. Even defeat, though it continued in long succession, could not shake their resolution or

weaken their confidence in God. They still looked forward to the time when he would interpose, and when his help would be all the more conspicuous from the fact that it had been long delayed. So each defeat found them as determined as ever; and if they retreated from one place, it was only to renew the conflict in another.

This fierce fanaticism of the Jews inspired all alike—men, women, and children. They had been born and nurtured in a nation where one idea was universal, and that was the settled conviction that they were the chosen and favoured people of the Most High. Surrender was never thought of. In all their fights the only alternative of victory was death. There was no middle ground. This resolution was strengthened, if it could be strengthened, by the wretched fate of those prisoners who fell into the hands of the Romans. They were made slaves of the worst kind, and sent to labour at the canal at Corinth. Every new incident of the war, whether it was a success or a reverse, only strengthened the stubborn temper of the Jews, and made them fight with a more reckless desperation and more deathless ardour.

An ordinary general might have failed before such enemies as these—so fierce, so reckless, so lavish of life, so patient, and so vigilant; an enemy who waited not to be attacked, but flung themselves upon their foes with an impetuous charge, that sometimes bore down everything; who were not content with fighting by daylight, but attacked with equal energy by night; who fell back only to make a fresh assault, and even in death hurled defiance at the conqueror.

But Vespasian was a general of no common kind. His men had been brought into the best possible discipline, and he knew how to make use of them to the best advantage. To the fanaticism of the Jews he opposed the disciplined valour of the Roman legions, and his own genius. Gradually the latter prevailed, and slowly but surely the Roman eagles were borne

forward over the land, and the Jews fell back sullenly, still fighting, and still looking for the long-expected deliverer.

This was the conflict into which Labeo and Cineas had thrown themselves, and this was the general under whom they fought. They thought nothing of the justness of their cause, because they took it for granted that it was just, since it was a war against rebels. The name of Rome was enough to them. But it was not a cause which they sought : their object was war, in the fury and the ardour of which they hoped to find respite from the grief that consumed them. It is action, vigorous action, that can keep the mind from preying on itself ; and it was action that they desired, little caring what that action might be.

From the first moment of their arrival in Judea they had found what they desired,—the wild excitement of active war against a race of vigilant and courageous enemies. They at once entered upon this new life with an ardour, an eagerness, and a recklessness, which made them both conspicuous. Their unfaltering friendship, their close association, and their union, both in the fight and out of it, made them famous both among their own men and the enemy. They undertook the most desperate enterprises, and one was as reckless of his life as the other. Wherever one went, the other went also ; and this union in friendship and in valour soon made them so marked, that the Roman armies regarded these two as their especial champions, and the camp rang with their fame. Cineas was rapidly advanced, and might have had command of a legion if he had wished it ; but Labeo had already been promoted to such a command, and Cineas had no higher desire than to be as near as possible to his friend. Promotion was nothing to him. He was only glad that his advance had been sufficiently rapid to enable him to continue with Labeo, and live in the same tent, and be near him in the conflict. Promotion made no difference in their conduct in battle. Labeo showed more recklessness

than was considered wise in the commander of a legion, and led his men to the most perilous undertakings; and Cineas, who had less responsibilities, risked his person more freely still.

The tumult of battle, the necessity of continuous vigilance, the fatigue of constant marches, the excitement of victory,—all served to give occupation to their thoughts, and draw them away from those memories which were so agonizing. Labeo thought no more of suicide. In the care which he had to bestow upon his command, he found that this life had yet occupation for his thoughts and demands upon his regard. Patriotism awaked and put forward its claims. Military ardour entered into rivalry with sorrowful regret, and being more active and more passionate, proved superior. The great responsibility which now rested upon him brought its own cares and its own anxieties; his mind was forced to occupy itself in plans of attack or of defence; he had to take part in council with the other generals, and recall all his experience in the past so as to make it useful in the present. Such things as these took up a large share of his thoughts—but little time was left for other things. When he was able to think, these subjects forced themselves before him, and demanded consideration; and when he was unable to give them his thoughts, their weariness and fatigue overpowered him, and he often turned from his professional cares to sleep.

As it was with Labeo, so it was with Cineas. New occupation of mind brought new cares and new thoughts, not perhaps so weighty as those of his friend, but still sufficiently important to employ the greater part of his attention. In his inferior position, also, he had less responsibility, and greater opportunity for displaying individual valour. He headed fierce charges, led off desperate expeditions, and in every enterprise which demanded peculiar daring and utter carelessness of life he stood forward most prominently as the leader. Thus each in a different way, but in the same employment, had found that which they most desired,—a respite from sorrow.

The war went on, and still, in spite of the most heroic resistance, the Jews were driven back before the armies of Rome. The strategic skill of Vespasian overmatched their headlong valour. Pass after pass was penetrated, citadel after citadel was seized. With Vespasian, a campaign meant incessant action. But little time for rest was allowed, either to his own soldiers or to those of the enemy.

Yet even in such a war as this, so crowded with events, it was not possible but that there should be some periods of rest. Short as these were, they yet occurred, and the soldiers formed their camps, and rested for a while from their labours. These were the times that were most dreaded by Cineas and Labeo.

For then, when all was secure, and the army rested in the well-fortified camp, and action for a while was suspended, the activity of mind which the business of war created was succeeded by a reaction, and from all their excitement they had to fall back upon idleness, and all the thoughts that inaction could foster.

For with them thought at such times meant memory, and memory meant misery. All that was sweet in past life now became turned to bitterness, from the fact that all was lost, and every pleasing recollection gave only a sting to the heart, which still yearned over the past, and longed after it in its desolation. All that past was overshadowed by that great cloud of grief in which it had all terminated, and thought, which reverted to early life, went on through that life till it came to the gloom of that death-chamber in Britain.

Their only chance of peace or calm lay in incessant action, and when that ceased, then all within grew dark and gloomy. Before Cineas there came the form of that lost one to whom all his soul had been so closely bound, and all the joys of that early life, which once had been so sweet, now were turned into sorrows unspeakable by the thought that all had ended in death. Before Labeo there arose the form of his idolized boy, with his

last words of love and longing—words which lingered yet, and sounded in his ears always, as though they would enforce attention and rouse him to obey them.

At such times the two friends instinctively sought each other's society, feeling in the silent sympathy of one another's hearts a peace and a comfort that nothing else could give. They did not speak many words with one another; they sat in silence; but sometimes, in low, mournful tones, they would talk of their old days at Athens, and while speaking of the times when they were boys together, they sometimes felt almost as if they were boys again. Yet in that boyhood at Athens there was one who was always present, enlightening the scene, whose merry girlish laugh rang down through the years, and whose fair delicate form rose before them among the images of that past which they thus recalled. Her name was never mentioned by either, but each felt that she stood prominent in the thoughts of the other, and though they did not trust themselves to name her, they yet carried her in their hearts as the centre around which all memories gathered.

Of Rome or of Britain they never spoke. That was different. For those places were connected with a time when Helena was with Labeo, all his own, and when his home was filled with sunshine by the bright beauty of that boy whom he so adored. Nothing which was in any way, however remote, connected with Marcus, was ever alluded to by Labeo. That was too sacred for even a distant allusion; the grief was all his own, and Cineas could not understand the fathomless depths of a father's love and longing.

So passed the hours of rest, irksome and painful to both, and the effort was made to beguile their thoughts by plans of war; but the effort was often useless, and the only remedy for both lay in renewed action.

The action, however, was never long delayed. The short periods of rest were soon over, the camp was broken up, and

the march began once more, and the fight, and the struggle, with its dangers and vicissitudes, gave its own occupation to the mind.

Into that struggle they rushed with renewed ardour, flying from thoughts so sad, flying from themselves, and seeking to renew that remedy which they had found before.

Thus the campaign went on, and month after month passed, and the Jews fell back further and further, evermore facing the invader, and never dreaming of giving up. For now the whole nation had roused itself as it had never done before, and all the patience, and all the expectation, and all the longing of all its past life now sought satisfaction. Faith looked for the great Deliverer, and still, through defeat and ruin, awaited his appearance.





XXXVI.

Jotapata.

THE Roman army had been delayed for weeks before Jotapata. The city was one of the strongest in the country, and here all the scattered bands of Jewish warriors who had fallen back before the invader had taken refuge. The siege was carried on by the Romans with the utmost skill and vigour, but the Jews fought with such energy—they were so vigilant in defence, and so active in their sorties—that but little progress was made. The gain of one day was lost on the next.

The Roman army thus lay before the city, still preparing those engines common to the war in those days, employing all the means of attack then known, and carrying on their operations with that patient perseverance which always distinguished them.

Labeo, as usual, had been most active in urging his men to the attack. His battering-rams were brought up most frequently, and hurled most furiously against the massive walls; his men rushed most desperately to the assault, whether by scaling-ladders or by movable towers; and the balistas and catapults which he employed were worked most incessantly. On the other hand, if he annoyed the Jews most, he also suffered most from them; he was exposed to the most frequent attacks, and was forced to make use of the most watchful vigilance.

On one day they had been fighting desperately. The Jews had been fired with new ardour by the advent of a skilful leader, who was conspicuous on the walls, and stimulated his men to acts of extraordinary daring. Burning material was showered down upon the soldiers who worked the rams. Boiling oil was poured upon those who sought to scale the walls. One movable wooden tower, which had been just finished after extraordinary labour, was reduced to ashes, and the Romans were forced to retire, wearied and exhausted, to their camp.

There they retired to rest. Labeo, worn out by the day's labour, flung himself upon his couch. The wearied guards kept a languid watch.

Suddenly a shout was heard, a wild cry of alarm, followed on the instant by shouts of fury and of vengeance. The wild alarm spread through the camp. The soldiers started to their feet. Labeo was up first, and hastily arming himself, rushed to the scene of tumult.

The camp was filled with confusion. From every side the soldiers came flocking, some half-armed, others unarmed, an agitated crowd. The guards were falling back, and already within the ramparts there was a host of Jews, who in their fierce onset swept all before them. At their head was the leader whose valour had been so conspicuous on the walls that day. He it was who had planned this night attack, and he was leading on his men to victory.

Labeo saw it all at once. In an instant he had gained his presence of mind. He issued his commands, formed his men, and presented a well-ordered front to the triumphant enemy. The Jews rushed forward. The Romans withstood the shock. In that hour of alarm and terror, they stood erect and bold, half-armed, yet without fear, inspired by the cool orders of Labeo, and by their own firm discipline. Again and again the Jews flung themselves upon their enemies, but the Romans

stood their ground. Then began a close hand-to-hand fight, in which each assailant singled out his man and attacked him personally.

In that fight the leader of the Jews was particularly distinguished. It was his voice that animated his followers, and led them on with fresh fury, after every repulse, to renew their attack. He was dressed in magnificent armour, which had once belonged to some Roman officer. He did not content himself with giving orders, but led the way himself, using his own weapon with fatal effect, wherever the opportunity presented itself.

Labeo had but half the men of the camp. At the first alarm he had formed his line out of those who first presented themselves. The rest were scattered, either sleeping yet or wandering in disorder. The crisis roused him to the highest pitch of daring. He stood at the head of his men, and freely exposed his life. The example of their general affected all the soldiers. They stood their ground firmly, and remained unbroken by the most furious charge of their enemy.

At last the Jewish leader made a final charge, with greater desperation, against the place where Labeo stood. From that tremendous onset, where every Jew was eager to devote himself to death for the good of his people, even the firm Romans recoiled. In despair, Labeo seized a standard and called upon his men to follow, and plunged into the ranks of the enemy. The Romans rushed forward after their standard and their general. The struggle that ensued was fearful. A wild rush from both sides was made at the standard; the one with the hope of capturing it, the other with the determination to save it. In a few moments the Jews were all around the bold leader who had thus thrown himself among them, and against them pressed the solid ranks of the legions of Rome. Labeo fought them, calling on his men, and the men tried to hew their way toward him through the enemy.

At last Labeo fell. The standard was torn from his grasp. Covered with wounds, he lay on the ground, his face upturned, his nerveless hand feebly waving his sword, and death from a dozen spears impending over him.

Suddenly a cry rang through the din of the combat.

"Away! Spare him. Attack the Romans. He is mine."

It was the leader of the Jews. His followers obeyed, and rushed upon the Romans.

The Jewish leader flung himself upon his knees, and tried to raise up Labeo.

"O Labeo!" he cried, in a voice which was well remembered by the other. "I have saved you. Thank God!"

"Isaac!" cried Labeo, in amazement.

"It is I," said the other. "Alas! that I should lift my hand against one whom I love. I recognized you by your voice in the gloom. Thank God, I have saved you."

"I want no safety—death is what I want. Leave me, and let them kill me."

"Never. I will save you. I will carry you to where you will be out of the tumult."

And Isaac stooped to lift the wounded man in his arms.

But at that moment a shout was heard, and a great throng of armed legionaries rushed forward from the side, taking the assailants in flank. At their head was Cineas, who had been at the other end of the camp, and had not heard the first tumult. But at the first noise that reached him he had started up, and gathering all the men of that quarter, he had led them to the scene of action. His quick mind had at once comprehended the whole state of affairs, and he had so arranged his attack that he took the Jews in flank, and drove them back in wild confusion. The other Romans rushed forward with fresh ardour, and the Jews, caught thus between two bands of assailants, fell back in dismay.

All this was but the work of a few moments.

Isaac placed Labeo on the ground, and sprang forward.

"Onward," he cried. "In the name of the God of Abraham, who fights for us, now is the time. Onward."

But the Romans overmatched them on all sides, and the most frantic efforts of the Jews were unavailing. The former, borne along by the impetus of their first onset, still swept all before them; and the latter, though still fighting, were yet unable to make a stand against the full tide of that onset. Cineas was at the head of his men, in the midst of the strife, calling upon them to avenge this disgrace and retrieve their disaster. Suddenly he saw the captured standard held aloft amid a crowd of Jews. To this he sought to fight his way. He pointed this out to his men, and implored them by their military oath, by the honour of the Roman name, and by their manhood to regain that lost standard.

The Romans made more furious exertions, and now, as they rushed in on all sides upon the Jews, they made greater headway.

In the midst of the throng of fighting men stood Isaac, near the standard, calling to his men. Toward him Cineas led a chosen band of his followers—men whom he had been accustomed to lead in desperate enterprises. A short, fierce struggle opened the way to the object of their search—a score of hands grasped the lost standard—the Jews who sought to retain it were cut to pieces.

Then Cineas rushed forward, seeking out the leader of the Jews, to attack him in person.

Isaac stood his ground with a handful of Jews around him. The rest were all falling back in confusion. His voice rang out loud and stern in the conflict, mingling entreaties and reproaches. But his men could not rally, and soon the Romans were all around.

"Cineas!" cried a feeble voice from the midst of the confused mass of men.

Cineas heard and recognized the voice of Labeo. He lay

on the ground, trampled by struggling soldiers as they rushed to and fro. In an instant Cineas had flung his arms around his friend, and dragged him away from danger.

"Alas, Labeo! is it thus I find you?" cried Cineas, in a mournful voice.

"Leave me," said Labeo, faintly. "Drive back the accursed Jews. But don't harm Isaac."

"Isaac!" exclaimed Cineas, in bewilderment.

"He is their leader. He saved my life. Save his. Leave me. Haste, or it will be too late to save him."

Though startled, Cineas at once comprehended the situation. He hurried to the place where Isaac still fought. He ordered his soldiers to take the Jewish leader alive.

Isaac, faint and weary from fatigue and wounds, fought but feebly, but still he stood his ground, for he had determined to die there in that camp; but the Romans rushed upon him. His sword was dashed from his hand. In an instant he was knocked down violently, and held firmly in the grasp of his enemies.

Meanwhile the Romans kept up their pursuit of the Jews, and now had it all their own way. The assailants were turned into a disorderly band of panic-stricken fugitives, who, crowded together in the camp, could scarcely find a retreat. Many were able to leap over the walls, but most of them perished within the fatal enclosure. Few returned to the city.

At last all was over; the last fugitive had departed, the last assailant had been slain. The Romans devoted themselves to the task of securing the wounded prisoners and conveying them away, and burying the dead. The noise of the soldiers at their work filled the camp.

Labeo was carried to his tent, and his armour was taken off. Cineas, knowing Isaac's skill, brought him to examine the wounded man. Isaac's bearing was dignified and serene as of old, with no trace of dejection.

Labeo was severely wounded in several places, but his chief

danger arose from the terrible bruises which he had received. Isaac examined him tenderly and carefully, and told Cineas that his condition was very dangerous, but that, with constant care and perfect rest, he might yet recover. In Labeo's tent he found such simples as were then used in active war for wounds and sickness, and after dressing the wounds, retired to an adjoining tent in which Cineas had placed him.

"You, too, are wounded," said he to Isaac. "You must attend to yourself. You are perfectly safe, for you are under Labeo's protection, and mine also. Do not feel despondent. You will be free again before very long."

"Before very long!" exclaimed Isaac in deep emotion. His eyes glistened; tears fell from them. He grasped the hand of Cineas, and murmuring some scarce audible words, he turned away.





XXXVII.

The Ministry of Sorrow.

LABEO'S wounds were so severe that the prospect of his recovery was uncertain. The first care of Cineas was to remove his friend away from the scene of conflict; and as he wished to attend to him, he also left the army for a time, and took Isaac with him. They went to a little village a short distance from Ptolemais, which was situated upon the summit of a lofty hill. The wide sea spread out before them, and toward the south-west lay the sublime form of Mount Carmel. Here, in this pure mountain air, with the fresh sea-breezes blowing continually, Labeo found a place where he could be most speedily restored. Only a few women and children remained in the village. Nearly all the men, and even the boys, had gone away to fight. Amid these careworn faces, Cineas saw the sad traces of the conflict. The husbands, brothers, and fathers of these poor villagers had left them; and though they devoutly believed that the God of the Jews would give ultimate victory to his chosen people, yet they still had fear for the safety of their own loved ones.

Here Isaac's unremitting care was followed by the recovery of Labeo. Isaac seemed to have relapsed into his former self,—the calm, self-restrained man. No trace remained of that bold leader who had headed his fierce followers on that memorable night attack. Cineas, as he sometimes looked at him, found himself wondering whether it could be, indeed, the same

man; but he had so many experiences of the deep fire and passion that lay beneath all this calm exterior, that he saw how this man could appear as he had in two such totally different characters.

At last Labeo recovered so far that he was able to move about, and enjoy the open air. His recovery was now only a matter of time.

One evening, when Labeo had retired to rest, Cineas sat with Isaac outside looking toward the sea, to where Mount Carmel reared its colossal form, now looming grandly in the dim twilight. Isaac was buried in his own thoughts, and said but little.

"Isaac," said Cineas, suddenly, "do you want to be free?"

Isaac started. "Free!" he cried, and then said nothing more.

"It is possible."

"Possible! Are you in earnest? Free? O Cineas, I would willingly give up all the life that may be allotted to me, if I could be free but for one month—yes, only one month."

"One month! you may be free as long as you live. For you have saved Labeo's life, and he owes you a debt, and so do I for his sake. Yes, Isaac, you deserve your freedom."

Isaac sat looking with fixed eyes at Cineas, his hands clenched, and his breast heaving with strong emotion.

"But if you were free, what would you do? Would you be willing to stay here with us?"

"O Cineas," said Isaac, "I will stay here as long as you retain me; but if you once say that I am free, I must go."

"Would you not stay as a free man?"

"Not an hour."

"Not for Labeo's sake?"

"There is another that I love more than Labeo."

"What! have you relatives?"

"Israel!" exclaimed Isaac, with deep emotion; "my country, my people; that is a love that is the strongest in me—for that I will gladly lay down my life."

"Israel," said Cineas, mournfully; "and do you not know that your countrymen are falling back everywhere from before the Roman armies?"

"That is why I want to join them."

"If you do, your life will not last a month."

"My life is nothing. It is not my life that I love, but my country."

"But if your countrymen are engaged in a hopeless task, why should you care to join them?"

"The task is not hopeless."

"The Romans have been victorious thus far."

"Ay, but the time will come."

"What time?"

"The time when all this will be changed. God reigns, let the nations tremble."

"Your God has done nothing yet."

"Our God can wait. He is patient. He has his own time. He watches the world with his infinite wisdom, and interferes at his own set hour."

"But soon there will be nothing to save."

"No; that time will never come."

"Not when Jerusalem itself shall fall, and the Temple be in the hands of Roman soldiers?"

"Jerusalem!" exclaimed Isaac, rising to his feet. "The Holy City! That shall never fall—never! The Temple shall never be defiled. No; then, if the Roman armies do indeed penetrate so far, then He will interpose, and he will show the world that he still reigns. Oh, may it be my lot to live but till then; then most gladly will I die."

"You are inflexible in your purpose, Isaac," said Cineas, mournfully; "and obstinate in your hope. After all, I can

understand your deep love for your country. You, even if you had no hope, would not be willing to survive your country."

"No," said Isaac, with lofty emphasis; "if I had no hope, I would still choose rather to lay down my life on the holy hill of Zion, in the Temple of the Most High, than live to see that Temple defiled. But it shall not be defiled. I have hope, a glorious hope; yes, something more than hope, since it is a fixed conviction, a faith that is part of my being, which I shall cling to in spite of every misfortune, till death itself shall come. My faith in Him cannot be shaken by any conceivable thing. I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that at last he shall stand upon this earth."

Cineas started, for he had heard those words before.

"And do you think this One of whom you speak will at last come to head your armies?"

"Every day only increases my belief. The longer he delays, the more glorious will be his appearance. And I now believe that it is best and wisest for him thus to try us. He is testing our faith. He knows all things, and acts in the best way. We are nothing in his hands. Praised be his holy name!"

"Isaac," said Cineas, after a short pause, "you are free."

"Free!"

"Absolutely free. I bid you go if you wish, or stay if you wish. You are no longer a prisoner. Do you hear?"

"I hear," said Isaac; "but I am overwhelmed. Say that again," he cried, in tones of entreaty. "Let me hear it once more. Let me know that my ears do not deceive me."

Again Cineas repeated those words.

Isaac fell upon his knees, and with upturned face gave thanks to the God of Israel. Then turning to Cineas, he tried to express his gratitude. In vain; emotion overpowered him. He could not speak. He flung himself upon Cineas, and embraced him.

Then, without a word, he walked hurriedly away. Cineas

saw his figure retreating in the gloom. He watched him as he strode quickly up the mountain that rose behind the village, and at last his retreating figure was lost to sight.

As long as Labeo was in a condition which was at all critical, Cineas had a general anxiety in his mind which created full occupation for his thoughts. But now, when the danger had passed away, the old feelings, so long fought against, returned with fresh violence. Convalescence is a state which is irksome to the mind. Labeo found himself going back to a life which he detested. Each day only added to his gloom, for there came before him more freshly than ever the form of that great grief which the activity of war had only lulled, but never altogether quieted.

The departure of Isaac threw them more than ever upon themselves and their own thoughts. There was nothing which could relieve these or divert them. As they sat together, they found themselves drifting back into the old melancholy and the old despair.

"Alas!" said Labeo once, abruptly breaking a long silence, "why was I saved? Why did I not perish there?"

Cineas sighed, but said nothing.

"I look forward," continued Labeo, "and my highest hope is death. The ambition which I once had has gone long ago. I have no motive, and nothing that makes life sweet. When I was in the field, I had my feelings as a soldier and the excitement of the campaign. Those are gone now."

"Don't be down-hearted," said Cineas. "You will be back to your legion soon. Every day makes you stronger."

"Yes; but in waiting till my strength comes I fret my heart, and then I grow weaker. It is hard for the body to recover when the soul is sick."

So they used to speak. Cineas found that he had no consolation.

Philosophy, he saw, was for a select few, and, what was more,

for those only when in health or in prosperity. In sorrow it failed. What did it give him now, or what had he learned from it, that he could offer to Labeo? Nothing. All that he could say was nothing more than a poor legionary might say to his sick companion,—“Don’t be down-hearted. You will soon be well.”

To him and to his friend there was no consolation given by Plato. In all his writings he found nothing which could soothe the heart in its anguish, and administer comfort and speak peace to the mourner. There on every page stood Socrates, sometimes sublime, but most frequently ironical, disputative, bantering, not the figure for presentation at the couch of sickness or of death. His soul craved words that were more tender and sympathetic. He yearned after something which he could take to his heart.

There came up before him, like an old memory, the form of One of whom he had once read, and who, he had thought, was far superior to Socrates; One who was always tender, always sympathetic—who looked with love upon all mankind, and chose out for his associates, not the proud, the wealthy, or the great, but the poor, the lowly, and, above all, the suffering. It was to the mourning and stricken heart that He best loved to draw near, and speak his words of tender consolation. There came up before him that face, sad, woful, but expressing in every lineament pity that was inexhaustible, love without limit, infinite mercy and compassion. Was not this the teacher for him now in his sorrow? Socrates, the man of iron, was driven out, and in his place there stood the Man of Sorrows.

There came to his mind that Being who had talked of this life and the next with the tone of one who was in both the Lord and Master; who, in his tender pity for the sorrow of this life, never ceased to point to another life where sorrow should all be over, and all be joined in him. This One came to the mourner, and bade him not crush his grief, or run away from it, but rather look up and gain an antidote, and see in God and

in heaven that which could rob all evil of its sting, and take from grief its sharpest pang.

This One had himself suffered and sorrowed, and, therefore, in the grief of others knew best how to sympathize.

And Cineas knew well, from the memories that now crowded upon his mind, how true that comfort was which this One could give. He had seen it. He had marked it in the gloom of the catacombs, where those who lived amid darkness, with tears, and in fear, yet bore up against all, and sometimes evinced a lofty calm, a pure and elevated resignation, which showed that they had mastered their own hearts through the power of their faith.

He had seen it there under the pressure of the same grief which he was enduring—when bereavement came, and the friend of a life was snatched away, and the survivor remained alone in the world. But he had seen the survivor stand over the grave of his love with a holy peace upon his face and in his heart, and commit his treasure to the tomb and turn away, and yet not be overwhelmed.

He had seen mothers nursing the wasted forms of little children who were pining and dying in their drear place of banishment; and yet these mothers murmured not, nor were their hearts broken. Faith made them look away to that divine consolation which they had cherished, and bereaved ones would thus stand before the grave, and join in the song of the Christians—a song which expressed love stronger than death, faith triumphant over sorrow, and hope full of immortality.

More strongly than all others he recalled the words of Helena, spoken when her son had gone from her. Then the father lay stupified by grief, and Cineas was speechless; but Helena stood erect, mourning, but calm, and spoke words which Cineas had treasured in his heart:—

“He said we would all meet again; and we may all have

that meeting. Where he has gone, there we all may go if we will.

“He is not dead : he lives. He has left his form behind, as we might leave our garments ; but he himself now stands among the redeemed.

“This is the glory of the religion of Christ, that little children may know him, and feel his love in life and in death. He invited them to him. He said that heaven was made up of such—‘Of such is the kingdom of heaven.’ And who is fit for heaven, if Marcus is not ?

“He is in light and life eternal, while we are in darkness and death. He looks down upon our grief from heaven. We may all meet him, if we will.”

Well did Cineas remember these words, simple but soul-felt, expressing that which sustained her and gave her peace ; but better yet did he remember those words in which she expressed her own faith, by which she clung to him whom she called her God and her Redeemer :—

“He is truth,” said she, in those words which Cineas had never forgotten ; “he is truth. Seek him, and you will find peace.

“He is the only one worth seeking after. Find him, and you gain immortality. He gives eternal life with himself in heaven.

“O Cineas, you have learned all that philosophy can ever tell you ; but there is something which you do not know, and you feel the need of it. You crave it. I have found it all in the religion of Christ.

“You know all about God except one thing, and that one thing you can never find out except from Christ. It is the one thing that he teaches. I knew all else before : I only learned from him this one thing—it is, that God loves me. For I know it—I know it ; and I love him who first loved me.

“He takes away all fear. Can I fear to die ? He before

whom I must appear is my Saviour, my Redeemer. He loves me, and I love him. I shall see him, and shall dwell in his presence for ever.

“Cineas, philosophy can give courage in the face of death to a philosopher, and make him die calmly ; but Christ can take away all fear of death from weak women and from little children. It is his love that does this.

“And now my soul clings to him. He supports me. I love him, and have no fear. Oh, that you had this love ! You would then know that all you seek is found in him.”

All these words, often recalled, gave to Cineas a deep longing to feel their meaning as Helena had felt it.

He still cherished that manuscript which she had lent him as some precious memorial of her. He had often read it in former days. Now, in his gloom, he turned to it once more.

He read it aloud ; and Labeo, too, heard the story of the Divine One. He was not unaffected by the sorrows of that mysterious Being.

Cineas was changed from his former self. His old self-complacency had completely gone. That conceit, that reliance on himself, on his shrewdness and penetration, on his learning and genius, had all been crushed out of him. He began to doubt himself. He began to suspect that he must have been foolish when he once believed that he was wise. All this humbled him. He felt that he was, after all, a poor, weak mortal, who, in the true trial of life, the furnace of affliction, was no better than the common peasant whom he once so despised.

The One of whom he read seemed to be the truly wise.

Had he not need to come to him ? Had he no sin to be pardoned ? This was the question that came to him—sin. Looking back now on the past, and looking in upon his own heart, he saw himself in a very different light. He had ceased to believe in himself. The current of his feelings had changed. He began to see himself as he was. All his life he had thought

that he was following the Socratic maxim, "Know thyself!" But he felt that he had never begun to know himself till now. Now all his fond self-love, his perfect self-satisfaction, his false assumption of wisdom and of philosophic fairness, his real weakness and folly, all these appeared before him.

When he thought how long he had held aloof from the One of whom he read, he began to fear that this offended One would now refuse to listen to him. Out of this dread came great sorrow.

"Oh, that I knew where I might find him!" This became his feeling. Above all else he wished to know him as Helena knew him—to go to him, and so gain rest for his soul.

Labeo had his own thoughts, which he kept to himself.

But there came over him a great change, which Cineas could not help seeing. His despair passed away, the stern fixity of his grief relaxed. At last one day he touched upon a subject thus far sacred, and for the first time mentioned the name of his son.

"Cineas, I know not what you find in that book, but it seems to me like a voice from heaven. Once I could not have felt thus, but I am much changed from my former self.

"Cineas, my friend, my brother," said Labeo, and as he spoke he took the hand of the other, and held it almost convulsively. "Listen to me, and I will tell you what is in my heart.

"Cineas, do you remember the words which *he* said to me? Do you remember? Do you recall the time when once I tried to kill myself and I heard the voice of Marcus,—

"‘Father, we will meet again?’

"Cineas, those words have never ceased to be sounded in my ears since he left me. ‘Father, I will be there first.’ ‘Father, we will meet again.’

"It was not only his words, but his voice, with that unutterable fondness that he always expressed when he spoke to me.

"Cineas, that voice has attended me everywhere. I have heard it in my tent at night, on the march, in the battle, always. I have heard it in my dreams.

"Oh, my friend and my brother, what is this voice? It is like that divine voice of which Socrates used to speak. It turns me from evil. Will it not lead me to good?

"For when I hear you read that book, I find out what I am. There is sin in me. Will this One of whom you read, and whom Marcus loved, will he look upon one like me?"

Cineas said nothing. Tears fell from his eyes. He pressed the hand of Labeo, and pointed to the book.

"Yes, yes, dear friend. You can tell me nothing. We both seek the same One. Let us study it together. Let us be boys again, and sit at the feet of that 'Master' of whom we have been reading there."

Under the influence of these new desires, life became changed. The two friends had an object before them, a search, an aim as high as heaven.

Labeo felt the effects of this. His recovery to health became rapid, and soon he was fully restored.

Then they departed to Ptolemais, and after that to Cæsarea.

Here they heard of the astounding events which had occurred at Rome. In their secluded village they had been ignorant of everything.

Nero was dead. Galba was dead. Otho had followed. A fourth was now on the throne—Vitellius.

The war in Judea was suspended, for the soldiers had before them other aims. They were not willing that the empire of the world should be tossed backward and forward from one general to another by the armies of the West. They thought that the armies of the East should have something to say.

On Cineas' arrival, he found that some months previously an order had come for his arrest. The arrest had not been made, partly on account of his retired position, and partly on account

of Nero's death. Yet Cineas on no account wished to have this impending over him. He therefore sought an interview with Vespasian, and asked his interference. This Vespasian at once granted, and took it upon himself to destroy the imperial warrant.

Vespasian himself was soon to issue imperial warrants. The army saw in him the fittest claimant to the throne of the world. The great general turned from Judea to Rome, and after securing his affairs in the East, he sailed to Italy. There a short time only intervened between his arrival and his attainment of imperial power.

Meantime, Cineas and Labeo waited in Cæsarea.





XXXVIII.

The Fall of Jerusalem.

AT last Vespasian was secure on the throne of the world. The Roman armies had leisure to renew their conquests in all directions, and Titus hastened to make an end of the war in Judea.

Jerusalem was the grand point of attack. All the struggle centred around this. All other strongholds had been captured, or rendered useless ; but there yet remained the greatest stronghold of all, mighty by situation, but to the Jews mightier still from the favour of the Most High.

Backward and still backward the Jewish armies had been driven, till at last they had all sought the common centre. But Jerusalem had to receive many others, who came and demanded admittance. The solemn festival of the Passover arrived, and the tribes came up to celebrate it. Multitudes thronged there, not terrified by the danger of the time, and not thinking of evil. They came to follow the customs of their ancestors, and commemorate the deliverance from Egypt. More than two millions of people filled the narrow streets of the Holy City, and crowded themselves within its walls, living in huts or in temporary shelters, and expecting in a few days to return to their homes.

But to these people, thus crowded together, there came the news of the advance of the Romans. At first they were afraid to leave, for fear of the enemy ; at last they could not leave, for the enemy stood before their eyes.

The enemy long dreaded appeared at last. There, on that side of the city where the ground was less precipitous, where Bezetha lay, the Roman armies prepared to make their camp.

If Jerusalem had been as it once was, with order and law supreme, then it might have baffled even the genius of Titus, and the armies of Rome. But order and law had long since departed. In the fury of popular excitement all government had become impossible, the city became a prey to madness and fanaticism. Anarchy ruled supreme, the most venerable offices were trampled in the dust, and the time-honoured dignity of High Priest had been bestowed by an unruly mob upon an ignorant rustic. The Romans had been driven from the city, but in their place there came those who were far worse than the Romans—men who sought to make use of the miseries of their country for their own advancement, and filled the city with the carnage of civil war when the enemy was at their gates.

Jerusalem had more than the Romans to encounter. It fought with its own self.

Within the walls were three rival camps, and three hostile armies. Eleazer held the temple, John the upper city, and Simon the lower. These three fought incessantly among themselves, with a persevering valour and an obstinate ferocity that might have secured triumph to the nation, if they had been directed against the common enemy.

Incessant war was waged between these three leaders and their followers. No plan of defence against the Romans was possible. The city was the prey of these contending factions. The wretched people had to suffer from the violence of these miscreants. The contending parties, in their fury, thought of nothing and spared nothing. Their madness reached its height when in some of their contests the storehouses where the supplies of grain were kept caught fire, and the hope of sustenance for Jerusalem perished in that flame.

It was to such a place as this that Isaac came, after Cineas

had given him his freedom. He found his countrymen enjoying the respite which was given by the departure of Vespasian to Italy. He found the city full of dissensions, filled with the desperadoes of the whole country, who had come here less for safety than for ambition or plunder. He saw men whom he loathed and despised filling the highest place ; he saw the city split up into factions, when union was the most needful thing ; he saw these factions wasting away the strength of Israel, and found none who were willing or able to listen to the voice of reason.

For faction was in the ascendant, and patriotism was lost sight of. Simon and John had their followers, who were devoted to them. The rest of the people stood by helpless, a prey to both. The city was filled with lawlessness and confusion. Divided against itself, it awaited the mighty army of Rome.

Such things as these filled Isaac with bitterness. He tried to do all that might be done by one honest and fervid soul. There were times when his fiery words produced some effect, but generally those to whom he spoke had other interests. He could do nothing with the followers of Simon, and the rest of the people were helpless. There was, indeed, one thing which he might have easily done. He might have roused the people of Bezetha against the tyranny of Simon, and led them against him. Perhaps he might have cast out this man ; perhaps he might have gone further, and cast out John. But this was a thing which Isaac never thought of attempting. He was not the man to add to the distress of the city by raising a fourth faction. He rather sought to conciliate, to proclaim more fully the old belief in the coming of the Messiah ; to exhort all men to union for his sake, so that when he came they might be found watching.

But Isaac's efforts after unity and peace and faith were all in vain. There seemed a strange perversity among the people,

and honest men were few, and the zealot and crazed fanatic had all the control of affairs. It was hard for Isaac to maintain that firm faith which he had always cherished hitherto. The struggle between faith and despair was terrible. Reason showed him that the city was doomed ; it showed no possible prospect of escape ; faith tried but feebly to cling to its old belief. The face of the God of Israel seemed averted, and it was hard to think that he yet intended to save the chosen people. But it was harder yet to think that after all his promises, the chosen people could be destroyed. This was the struggle in the mind of Isaac, and the struggle filled him with agony. He tried to look on all the horrors around him as the punishment of national sin. But punishment, when it came from God, was chastening in its effect, and Isaac saw that there was no purifying or chastening here. It rather looked like that madness which precedes destruction, like the breaking up of national life, like the ruin and the death of Israel.

All the circumstances around tended to deepen his despair. On the day on which he entered the city he saw a figure on the walls—a gaunt, emaciated being, who looked like one of the old Hebrew prophets, but fierce and wild, with a fiery eye that gazed evermore on vacancy, and a crazed brain. He had only one word, only one utterance, and that he never ceased to repeat. Upon Isaac these words, then heard by him for the first time, produced an awful dread, filling his mind with forebodings of that on which he dared not let his thoughts dwell, sending through all his frame a thrill of horror.

This was what the wild prophet said as he strode along the walls, the place which he chose to frequent, roaring out his fearful words in a hoarse and terrible voice, with one monotonous tone that never varied :—

“ A voice from the East !

A voice from the West !

A voice from the four winds !

A voice against Jerusalem, and the Holy House !

A voice against the bridegroom and the bride!
A voice against the whole people !
Woe to Jerusalem !
Woe, woe, to Jerusalem !”

Isaac had heard of this man before. The people had become familiar with his cry. For seven years he had shouted it over all Judea. He had been scourged and tortured, and punished in all possible ways. In vain. He uttered nothing but his cry of “Woe to Jerusalem !” and still by night and by day the same cry sounded,—“Woe, woe to Jerusalem !”

Though most of the people had grown familiar with this man, and looked upon his cry as the utterance of a poor, harmless idiot, his words produced a different effect upon those who heard them for the first time. They came to Isaac with a fearful meaning, and sounded like the utterance of a prophet of God.

Other horrors were not wanting. On the night when Isaac first entered, as he walked sadly about among the throng, he noticed that all were looking up to the skies with faces of fear. He looked there, and the fear of all was communicated to his own heart. There, in the midst of the heavens, he beheld the outline of a comet, shaped like a sword, which seemed to point to the city, and promise ruin. At first there was nothing but panic. Night succeeded to night, and the awful form grew larger and more vivid, burning fiery red in the black sky, extending from the horizon to the zenith, wrathful and menacing. What meant this? Was it indeed the herald of ruin?

Isaac, in his passionate love for Israel and in his strong faith in the God of Israel, after the first panic had subsided, refused to look upon that sign with fear.

“No,” he cried, and he harangued the people everywhere, “no, it is not a sign of terror, but of hope. It is the promise of the Deliverer. For how must Israel be delivered? As she always has been—by the sword. Not, however, by a human sword, but by the sword of that heavenly One who now places

it there before our eyes, among the stars, to tell us that he is faithful. Let us prepare for him. He is coming!

“Our eyes behold the manifest glory of his coming. Alleluia! Praised be his name!”

And the impassioned words of Isaac, the utterance of a faith that for a moment burst through the gloom of despair, and clung to heaven and to hope, fired the hearts of the people. They too would hope and believe and praise. They took up his cry, and ten thousand voices shouted, “Alleluia!”

But the people, in their fury and excitement, could not always cherish hope. Their feelings alternated. Hope turned to despair. Panics ran among them. Men’s minds became disordered. Visions appeared in the air; shapes glided through the gloom; sounds of no mortal nature seemed to strike upon the disordered senses of many.

Ten thousand rumours every day passed from mouth to mouth, filling all with supernatural dread. Brilliant lights glowed about the temple; one of the gates opened of its own accord; prodigy succeeded prodigy, and each created fear or hope: and thus faith and despair, joy and terror, incessantly alternated, till men believed anything or everything, and the senses of all became influenced by one sympathetic excitement; till the portents that rose before the imagination of one were visible to all, till whole crowds could look up in the skies, and see in the air embattled hosts and chariots and armies, and hear the noise of battles and the thunder of the war.

Thus the Romans came to such a city in such a state. When the glittering files of the Roman legions first appeared, the people had no fear. They believed that in this way the enemies of Israel were brought before Jerusalem that all might be destroyed, and the Most High avenge his chosen ones. God’s people were brought face to face with their enemies, and the end would be the complete destruction of those enemies.

This Isaac proclaimed, seeking to free the hearts of all, and

hoping that if the Romans sat down to the siege the internal disunion might cease. The appearance of the hostile armies gave him nothing but hope and comfort. Faction, as he thought, must die out in the presence of war.

The Romans began to form their camp on the only side on which a siege was possible, the lower city. Here between them and the upper city there lay three massive walls, each surrounding a separate district; but these walls on this side were the only ones that could be assailed by Roman engines. On the other side were precipices.

But as the Romans began to station themselves and entrench their camp, the Jews were not idle. At the first sight of the enemy, who thus came before the Holy City with arms and engines, a fury passed through all the fanatical people.

Isaac saw in this the best time for action—a time when the Romans might be attacked with the violence of a surprise, and when Jewish warriors could exert themselves in that sudden and impetuous onset for which they were famous.

He himself had become celebrated for his own exploits, and particularly that at Jotapata. Great numbers knew him well, and followed him wherever he led. Living in the quarter Bezetha, which he knew would be first attacked, he determined for his part to devote himself toward the task of beating back the enemy, hoping that the internal factions at last would fall to pieces.

Now came his first opportunity, and, with fiery words and flashing eyes and vehement gesticulations, he went round summoning all to follow him. An immense multitude prepared to obey.

The Romans were working at their entrenchments. The tenth legion lay nearest.

Suddenly the gates were thrown open, and there rushed forth an innumerable multitude.

Forming themselves on the plain, the first men that came

out, chosen for their valour and strength, advanced upon the Romans.* Behind them came others in vast throngs, some orderly, others in confusion, but all rushing forward till the whole space grew black with human beings, and still the gates sent forth undiminished crowds. For the cry of that attack passed through the city, and all took part; and men who had never seen or heard of Isaac now hurried out to attack the hated enemy.

At the head of all Isaac marched.

The Romans had not had time to make their trench. The plain was open. With their usual resolution, and with something like contempt for the multitude before them, they formed their line of battle, and awaited the onset.

It came.

With a cry that rose like long successive peals of thunder into the skies, and echoed among the surrounding heights, till its long reverberations were borne over all the city, and over all the Roman camps, the Jews rushed upon their enemies.

The Romans had already learned the desperation of the Jews, and their fury in attack; but they had never known anything like this. For here the Jews came in hosts that were overwhelming, with a fury that was appalling. True to their discipline, the Romans formed their ranks with spear and shield, and withstood the first rush. But the Jews cared nothing for spear and shield. Each man, in his frenzy, thought nothing of death, nothing of himself, but was eager to fling his body upon the point of hostile spears, that so he might break their well-ordered lines, and force a way for his fellows.

The Romans stood firm for a time. The first rush was repelled, and the second, and the third. But the Jews only recoiled to rush forward once more, and each time the rush was more tremendous, since it carried within itself the accelerated impulse that arose from the increasing numbers that still rushed forward, and lent the force of their impetus to the

onset of the lines in front. At last, at one mad onset of the Jews, the centre of the Roman line fell back a little. Hundreds of Jews flung themselves there. Isaac snatched a Roman eagle, and shouted to his men. They rushed onward with new fervour. The Roman line was broken, and in an instant a vast array of Jews poured through the space, and wound around the enemy, and assailed them in front and in the rear.

Now this was the characteristic of the Jews, that their fury remained undiminished, but rather increased as the fight went on. The Romans lost heart. They were awed by the fierceness of their enemies. They were discouraged and terrified by the break of their lines. They found themselves assailed on all sides. They could no longer stand their ground. They fell back. They retreated. Panic came over them, and they fled in all directions, while the Jews pursued, with Isaac at their head, bearing the captured eagle.

“Alleluia! God hath given us the victory! The God of Israel is fighting for us!”

Such was the cry that rang out amid the thunder of the fight, and the Jews now fully believed that the hour of their redemption had come, and that their enemies were in their power.

But it was only one legion that had been driven back. Others remained, firm in discipline, not over-awed, nor terrified.

Behind the tenth legion was that of Labeo. The soldiers had become familiar with Jewish attacks, and had been tested in the fiercest conflicts. The thunder of the fight had roused them all, and Labeo had formed his men; and as the tenth legion fled, and the Jews pursued, the soldiers of Labeo came marching forward to renew the fight.

All the Roman army was on the alert. Titus himself had ordered up all his men to restore the fight. Legion after legion was roused, and advanced to the front.

But the onset of the Jews, accelerated by the flush of victory,

and belief in the presence of the God of Israel, could not easily be checked.

The men of Labeo stopped in their advance before the successive waves of that attack.

In front of them raged an awful conflict. The Jews still flung themselves upon the spears of the enemy, content if by death they could open a way to others, and behind those who fell others advanced furiously, frantically, and the air was filled with yells, like those of madmen.

The Jews fell by hundreds and by thousands, but the Romans fell also, and it was with difficulty that their rigid lines could be maintained, or the living close up so as to fill the place of those who had fallen.

At last the Romans wavered. In vain Labeo tried to sustain his men. The fury of the attack, so sustained, and with such freshness, was too much for them. He stood at the head of his men, and freely exposed his life; he called on them by all that they valued most highly to stand firm. Cineas, at the other end of the line, devoted himself with that heroism which he had always shown. But the Romans yielded ground, and though their lines remained unbroken, still they were forced back—step by step, it is true, but the very fact of retreating served to discourage them.

Backward and still backward they found themselves forced.

In the midst of the fight Cineas recognized Isaac, who still headed his men, and held aloft the captured eagle, and though in the thickest of the fight, seemed yet to bear a charmed life, for of all the blows aimed at him none took effect. All around him his men fell, but still Isaac fought and called on his men, and his cry rang out sharp and clear,—

“Alleluia! for the God of Israel is here!”

Then Cineas thought that he had done all this by setting Isaac free, and it was with bitterness that he reproached himself.

Legion after legion came up. Titus was in the midst of his soldiers, calling on them to stand, to advance, to take vengeance on these contemptible Jews, whom they had so often conquered. And some stood firm ; but in the centre of the fight, where the battle was fiercest, there they fell back.

In their retreat they were pressed to the side of a declivity, up which they were forced. Here the soldiers could see the full extent of the force that assailed them. Between them and the city the plain was black with human beings, all rushing forward. The sight filled them with awe.

Still they retreated.

Cineas, in his despair, had rushed over to Labeo, and, in the midst of the fight, the two friends took a hasty counsel as to what might be done. Far and wide the battle raged. They saw the Romans falling back, pressed hard by their fiery foe.

They saw, however, that the fight was all in front ; that the Jews were undisciplined, and gained the advantage by brute strength and reckless devotion rather than by anything like strategy.

Their flanks and their rear were all exposed. It needed but an instant to make all this plain.

By a dexterous movement, Labeo disengaged his men from the fight, and, falling backward, he moved rapidly over the hill-slope toward the left. The Jews rushed forward, some still assailing his legion, others seeking to enclose the other Romans. But Labeo led his men rapidly onward for the space of about half a mile, and then with a shout his soldiers fell upon the flank of the Jewish host.

Before the rush of that solid body of men everything gave way. The Jews were not prepared for an attack in that quarter. They turned to encounter it, but in vain. Their devotion, their recklessness, was as great as before, but they had not the same advantage. In front the pressure was all one way, and those

behind urged forward those in front. Here all was confused and disorganized.

The Romans swept the Jews before them helplessly.

They marched right across the entire field, and then wheeled and attacked their enemy from behind.

Enclosed between two hostile lines, the Jews fell in every direction. They soon found out their danger. Now Roman discipline told with fatal effect against their own disordered crowds. The Romans in front, who had retreated, turned once more, stimulated by the sight of their own men in the rear of the enemy.

The Jews were overpowered.

Panic spread through them. They sought to escape. Only one way was possible, and that was toward a steep declivity that lay on one side. Here they were driven. They were hurled down the descent in dense masses, and the Romans, following fast after, had all the advantage of a more elevated position.

Here, down this declivity, with the Romans pressing after them, confused, disordered, and disheartened, the Jews were all crowded together, and scarce capable of resistance. The fight became a massacre.

Thousands who could disengage themselves fled along the valley back to the city, and were saved; but thousands fell beneath the Romans.

One band of men there was which did not share the panic. Driven back, they still fought, and sternly fell back toward the gate from which they had come. These were the men whom Isaac had led out.

In front of them stood Isaac, still holding the captured standard. In vain the Romans rushed upon these men, seeking to recover their eagle. They were forced back by the unquailing valour of the Jews. And so, slowly and obstinately, Isaac led back his men, and the gates were opened; and if they were defeated, they at least had the glory of the captured eagle.

Such was the result of the fierce conflict.

But the Jews did not lose heart. Day after day passed, and they made new attacks. The Romans now had completed their entrenchments, and could not be so easily driven back. Alternate successes and reverses marked each day; but the Romans steadily gained, and the Jews steadily lost, till at last the Roman engines were ready to be brought against the walls.

The ponderous engines of war which formed the Roman artillery were brought up; the catapults and balistas hurled their javelins and stones upon the doomed city; the battering-ram thundered upon the solid walls.

Showers of stones and darts fell incessantly. At first the enormous size of some of these stones, and their terrific effect when they fell and crushed all before them, startled the Jews. One engine there was which threw a stone of enormous size. When this missile came roaring through the air, the Jews on the walls would give warning, and seek shelter.

The prophet of woe walked round the walls among the fighting men, denouncing woe as before. Few regarded him now. But a thing happened one day which made many regard both him and his prophecy.

As he walked along the walls he suddenly stopped and repeated his ill-omened cry,—

“Woe to Jerusalem!
Woe, woe to Jerusalem!”

He paused for a moment.

“The rock is coming!” cried the Jewish soldiers, as they saw the flight of the huge missile mentioned before.

All the soldiers rushed in different directions for safety.

The prophet stood still.

Then his voice rang out with terrible emphasis,—

“Woe to Jerusalem!
Woe, woe to Jerusalem!
Woe to myself!
Woe, woe to myself!”

The enormous stone rushed through the air. It struck the speaker, and dashed him to pieces.

The voice of the prophet of woe was heard no more, for the woe itself had come.

Battering-rams dashed against the walls, and beneath the reiterated blows the massive erections trembled. The Jews were incessant in their efforts to avert the danger. They made bold sallies. They burned the rams. They drove back the enemy. But over all the mad assaults of the Jews the patient firmness of Roman discipline steadily triumphed.

At last a wide breach was made. The Romans rushed to the attack. A terrible conflict followed. The Romans entered and fought their way along the streets. The Jews fell back in spite of all their valour, and at last took refuge in the space that was enclosed by the second wall, Akra. The lower city was in possession of the Romans. Titus made his camp in the midst of it, and then prepared to attack the second wall.

The Jews were disheartened by the capture of the lower city, but were not yet despairing. They thought that the upper city could yet protect them. They had confidence in the massive walls and in the steep declivities. The people were encouraged by the hope that the hour would yet come when their Deliverer would appear. Among those who sought by such hopes to stimulate them to action, the most prominent was Isaac. "The time has not yet come," he cried; "God will not come till man has done his best. But at last, when we can do no more, then will he appear."

And the people took fresh courage.

But while the Romans were fighting from without, the factions ceased not. The external enemy and the common danger could not quell the fierce strife that raged within the walls. At times the two parties would unite; but when the immediate impulse had ceased, then they would return to their former hostility, and Simon and John would renew their mad struggle.

Thus the city wasted its strength. Horrors without end succeeded each other within the walls.

Despair came more and more frequently to the heart of Isaac. His faith faltered. He could not see the end of this. The capture of the city he would not believe in for a moment. The desecration of the Temple of God seemed incredible, and impossible. The Deliverer must come—but when, alas! when?

“How long, O Lord, how long!”

Such was the cry that escaped from the despairing soul of Isaac as he saw the horrors around. Such horrors seemed too great. Such horrors could not in his mind be compensated for even by that final glory for which he looked.

His only consolation was war. The madness of the fight could distract his thoughts, and he could feel some satisfaction in beating back the enemies of Israel.

“But, O Lord, how long!”

Alas, he knew not the full extent of the agony that yet awaited all within the doomed city.

Meanwhile, the people, in the extremity of their sufferings, knew not what to do. Many sought to escape. Large numbers were kindly received by Titus, whose humanity was great, and whose pity for the wretched Jews was unflinching. But after a time the Jews made use of their desperate situation to work on the feelings of Titus, and entrap the Romans into snares. Many Romans had already perished through their own merciful feelings. Such things as these put an end to all mercy. No more Jews could escape. They were shut up in the city, and exit was impossible.

Titus, from his camp within the enclosure of the lower city, prepared to attack the second wall. His rams at length made a wide breach here, and his eager soldiers rushed into the upper district.

At first the Jews fell back, and allowed the Romans to pene-

trate to a considerable distance. Carried away by their own ardour, the Romans marched through the streets, driving back their enemies and thinking that victory was theirs.

Suddenly, however, an immense multitude of Jews made an attack upon them near the broken wall. The breach had remained as it was. It had not been widened so as to admit of a large number entering at one time, and those who were already within could not readily be reinforced. Here the Jews made their attack. A large body stood by the breach, repelling those who sought to enter. Others fell upon the Romans who were already within the wall. Suddenly every house seemed filled with frenzied people. Every side street formed an avenue for the rush of some assailing force. The Romans were surrounded on all sides. All around their enemies rushed upon them. From the roofs of the houses vast multitudes hurled down rocks and stones, and darts and fiery missiles.

The Romans fought with their usual resolution, but they were outnumbered, and taken at an enormous disadvantage. They fell on all sides before their enemies. All around and all above them seemed filled with assailants. They sought to retreat, but they were hemmed in among the narrow streets, and retreat was impossible. Some escaped, but most fell victims to Jewish vengeance.

At one place there stood a Roman officer, who, with his back to the wall, resisted for a long time a crowd of enemies. His long resistance at last made him weary, and though he still fought, there was less vigour in his blows.

Suddenly one of the fiercest leaders of the Jews rushed up to him with uplifted weapon.

The Roman held up his shield and prepared to fight this new enemy.

But his enemy suddenly dropped his spear.

“Cineas!”

“Isaac!”

The recognition was instantaneous and mutual.

"Back ! back !" shouted Isaac to his followers. "This man is my prisoner."

But his followers did not seem very willing to obey. In their fury they rushed on, and in another moment Cineas would have fallen. But as Cineas prepared to defend himself, Isaac threw himself before him.

"Back !" he shouted. "The first man that touches him dies. He is mine."

There was something in the voice and attitude of Isaac which seemed to strike awe into the crowd. They fell back.

"This way," cried Isaac to Cineas. "Quick, or you are lost."

And he darted into a door-way. Cineas followed.

Isaac hurried up to the house-top, and passed along several roofs. Once he was stopped ; but he told the men who stopped him that Cineas was his prisoner, whom he was leading away. He was then allowed to go on, though reluctantly.

Then Isaac passed over many houses, down the length of an entire street. All around there was still the noise of the conflict, the triumphant shouts of the Jews, mingling with the groans of the wounded and dying.

At last Isaac reached a house, and began to descend the opening in the roof. Cineas followed, and at length found himself in a room. The house appeared to be without inhabitants. Looking out of the window, he saw in the court-yard a number of dead bodies.

Isaac noticed the start which Cineas gave at the sight. For the dead bodies were those of women and children.

"They were starved to death !" said Isaac, in a hoarse whisper, that thrilled through the heart of Cineas.

"Here," said Isaac, after a pause, "here you are safe."

Cineas said nothing, but stood looking at the bodies in the court-yard.

"Alas!" he exclaimed at last. "How you are suffering!"

"Suffering!" said Isaac; "it is a suffering beyond words—beyond thought."

"Why will you not yield in time?" sighed Cineas.

"Yield! never!" cried Isaac with his old vehemence. "Every Jew will die first. The whole nation stakes its existence on this fight—the whole nation, men, women, and children.

"There can be only one end," said Cineas. "Who can withstand Rome?"

"The Jews have hopes of which the Romans know nothing."

"Hopes!" exclaimed Cineas, but said nothing more.

"Hopes—ay. More,—belief, conviction. We know in whom we believe. The God of Abraham will never break his covenant. He afflicts us sorely, but he will yet save us.

"Sorely, sorely does he afflict us. Sufferings have been ours such as men never knew before. Alas! Why is all this? Why is our anguish so great? What have we done against thee, O thou Most High?"

"But yet, why do I speak? He has his own purposes. Perhaps the memory of this anguish may hereafter separate us more widely from the heathen, and make us his own more palpably. But, O thou who reignest on high! is not this enough? Why demand more? How long must we suffer? How long shall the enemy triumph? How long, O Lord, how long?"

"Titus is merciful. He feels for you," said Cineas. "He endeavours to avert your doom. But what can he do if you persist? Can you not return to that old obedience to Rome, which, after all, gave you so much freedom? Your Temple would still be yours."

"To Rome! No. Never. Now has come the time when the kingdoms of this world shall be given to the Lord and to his chosen people. By the magnitude of our sufferings you may estimate the splendour of the coming triumph. Yes, if

mere suffering is necessary, we can suffer more. We have not yet shed all our tears. We can shed more. We can spare more blood of ours. We can do as much as we have done for the sake of Him who shall deliver us.

“He is at hand! The day is close by. The day is near when Titus shall wake to find himself confronted by a greater than he, and when the Jews shall rush to victory after their heavenly Deliverer.”

Cineas said no more. He admired that faith, so mistaken, yet so strong, which thus clung to the object of its belief in the midst of despair. He knew best how false were the hopes of Isaac. For the Deliverer had already come, as Cineas knew, and had performed his work. The prophecies of Jesus rang in his ears, and he knew well what must be the end. Yet for this soul, with its errors, its hopes, its aspirations, and its sublime faith, he had sympathy and tears.

His situation was desperate. His life was saved; but for how long? He was in a city where people were dying from famine every day, where men fought with one another for food, and starvation destroyed far more than the Roman sword. He was in a lonely house, but if he were once discovered he would perish. Isaac himself knew not what to do. It was impossible to set him free. The walls were now so guarded that escape without discovery was impossible.

But a means of escape soon appeared. The Romans, though repulsed, prepared to regain what they had lost. A new attack was made. The breach was widened, and vast masses of men poured through in overpowering numbers. Slowly, sternly, and in perfect order, they marched through the streets, driving the Jews before them, guarding against surprise by sending bodies of men along the house-tops, and slaying all who were in the houses. Thus they made their second attack, and occupied the whole district called Akra, till at last the Jews were driven out, and took refuge in the upper city of all, which comprised

Zion, and Mount Moriah, with the Temple, and the Tower of Antonia.

As the Romans penetrated every part of the city, they passed through that street in which Cineas was confined. He rushed upon the house-top, as he heard their cries. He saw the flash of the Roman standards. He was saved.

But though the Romans had thus taken Bezetha and Akra, their hardest task yet remained. Mount Zion was almost impregnable. The Temple was a fortress of the strongest kind; and the Tower of Antonia was strong enough of itself to resist an army, even if all the rest were captured. This was the work that lay before Titus.

Yet, before he carried the siege to its final extremity, Titus still offered mercy. His offers were rejected with scorn by the frenzied people.

Many, indeed, there were who in their wretchedness longed for nothing so much as surrender. They saw in their own leaders only the vilest of mankind. They saw no one man of probity and true patriotism, around whom they might rally. What were John and Simon, that they could trust in them? The emissaries of these men constantly went about plundering, and murdering, and adding to the general woe. A people who were led by such as these, did not seem the ones to whom a Deliverer would come. They lost heart and courage. Faith died, and thousands thought that God had forsaken Israel.

Crowded as they now were into Zion, the Jews began to suffer worse extremities of hunger. Food could only be procured by stealth, and that which was brought in was often snatched up hurriedly by those who were nearest. Many tried to escape, and so fled at all hazards to the Romans. Many of these were slain by the Romans, in punishment for the former perfidy of their countrymen, yet numbers were saved. But John and Simon in their civil tyranny sent round bodies of men to prevent escape. These men entered house after house,

and wherever they found any one who expressed desire to get away, or even discontent, they put him to death. Every house was at the mercy of roving bands. Some came for plunder, but most for food. Many a little stock of provisions, carefully hoarded up by a father for his family, was seized by such miscreants, and the family left to die by the worst of deaths.

At length Titus had his engines ready for the attack on the Tower of Antonia. This was a fortress of most massive construction and commanding position. Vast machines were erected there, and rams of enormous size were brought against the walls. But the Jews worked with equal zeal. They undermined the ground beneath the engines, and filled it with combustibles, which they set on fire. The fire burned away the stays that kept up the mined passages, and at once the vast engines fell into the flames beneath, which rushed up amid the ruins, and enveloping them all, reduced to ashes the long labour of the Romans.

Engines seemed useless, and something else had to be tried. Titus determined to surround the city by famine, and starve the people into submission. The legions were posted in detachments all around. Every man worked, and with such zeal, that in the incredibly short space of three days, Jerusalem was completely enclosed by a barrier over which none might pass.

Then, indeed, famine seemed inevitable. Hitherto, by infinite hazard, provisions had been brought from a distance, and men could cross in the dark; but now that guarded Roman wall prevented all communication with the outer world.

After the wall was finished, Titus went round its whole extent, accompanied by many of his officers, among whom were Cineas and Labeo. As they came to where the deep Vale of Hinnom lay beneath them, they saw a scene which spoke more loudly than words of the horrors of the siege. Unburied bodies lay there by thousands, covering the bottom of the valley, and

the hill-side, where they had been carelessly thrown by those who bore them out of the city. The taint of their corruption filled the air. Titus shuddered, and called God to witness that he was not responsible for this.

Within the city famine now came down upon all. Whole families perished.

Cineas could see the signs of that great agony as he looked down into the Vale of Hinnom ; but within the city Isaac saw and felt the agony itself.

Day after day some tale of horror came to his ears ; tales incredible, monstrous, abominable ; tales which he refused to believe, till one case occurred which made him willing to believe anything, and first sent the thought into his mind that God had turned away his face from Israel for ever.

A woman, in the madness of her hunger, killed her own child, to feed on its flesh. The famine-stricken wretches who came to her house in search of food discovered this hideous repast, and left shuddering. The city rang with the frightful story.

Isaac heard it, and found out that it was true.

“ O God of Abraham ! ” he murmured, with bitterness in his heart, “ if thou canst allow this, then what is there that thou wilt not allow to be done ? ”

The faith of Isaac faltered then. He looked toward the Temple, whose golden walls flashed in the sun as brightly as ever.

“ Dwelling-place of the Most High ! ” he murmured ; “ Holy Place of Israel ! Since this thing has been done there is no hope for thee. O glory of Israel ! I will not survive thee. I will die amid thy ruins.”

Isaac fought, but it was no longer the fight of hope. It was the fight of despair, in which one who knows that all is lost, and that he must die, seeks to sell his life as dearly as possible.

The Romans found their engines of no avail against the Tower of Antonia, and so tried other measures. A small band

of daring men, out of their own impulse, set forth one dark night, and stealthily scaled the walls, and entered the tower. The Jewish guards were asleep. They were slain. The Roman trumpet-peal announced both to friend and foe that the castle was taken. The Romans rushed forward by thousands. The Jews were confounded, and panic-stricken. The tower was lost.

Beside the tower was the Temple, and a passage lay from one to the other. Over this the Romans rushed in the first flush of success, hoping to capture this at the first onset. But the Jews were aroused by this time, and rushed in from all sides to defend the Holy Place. Long and fierce was the conflict. At last the Romans were forced back.

Yet they had the Tower of Antonia, and this was a great step towards complete victory.

And now Titus, seeing the vast strength of the Temple, and the difficulty of getting at it with his machines, gave orders for the demolition of the tower, that a broad way might be made up to the Temple walls, where his engines might be fixed, and over which his soldiers might march in sufficient numbers to overpower the Jews. The work was gigantic, but the labour of Roman armies was always of the most arduous character. They worked with their usual diligence, and soon a way was made up to the Temple walls, fit for their operations.

Yet before the final assault Titus paused. All through the siege he had been animated by emotions of pity and mercy. He wished once more to give a chance of escape to those wretched and doomed sufferers. He wished also to preserve that glorious Temple, which gleamed so radiantly before his eyes—the wonder of the world—the Holy Place of Israel.

Once more he offered terms, but the terms were rejected.

On that day a great horror fell upon the Jews.

It was announced that the *Daily Sacrifice* had failed. There were no more victims.

The Daily Sacrifice, offered through the ages, the tie that bound Israel to her God, was over for ever.

Isaac heard the news, but scarce felt surprise. He had prepared for the worst. A deeper gloom came over him. He heard many, who still clung to the fond belief of ages, declaring that now, since the sacrifice had ceased, the Deliverer must come. He heard this, but only smiled bitterly.

"The Deliverer," he murmured. "Ay—yes, the Deliverer is near; but the only one for us all now is Death."

The rams thundered against the Temple walls day after day; but against those tremendous stones, built in a former age, and looking like the work of giants, nothing could be done. The rams could not shake the stones of the old Jewish kings.

Then they tried other means, and kindled large fires against the gates. The fire spread. The gates, massive as they were, yielded to the intense heat. They charred, and crumbled, and at last fell in.

Scarce could the Romans wait for the fires to subside, in their fierce impatience to rush forward. They burst through, but they found the Jews there, standing firmly, as resolute as ever, endowed with new courage, since they fought on that holy ground. The fires spread amid the cloisters, and devoured the wood-work. But amid the fires the Jews still held their ground, and at last the Romans were compelled to fall back.

But the attack was renewed on another day. The Romans poured forward in ever-increasing numbers. The Jews at last were overmastered. They retreated to the inner court.

Then came the last day of the fight.

On that day all was to be decided. Titus had given strict orders that the Holy House itself should not be harmed, and that the flames which they might use in their attacks should be kept away from that one place.

The morning of that day came. It was the tenth day of the

month Ab, the anniversary of the day on which the Temple was formerly burned by the king of Babylon.

On that morning there appeared to the excited senses of the Jews that which showed them that all was lost.

It was early dawn, before the sun arose, while yet the scene around was dim in the morning twilight.

Suddenly there arose a sound like the rush of a vast multitude, mingled with the sound of innumerable voices, low, solemn, with infinite melancholy and mournfulness in their tones,—

“LET US LEAVE THIS PLACE!”

These were the words that were heard by the Jews, as, haggard and emaciated and despairing, they looked and listened,—

“LET US LEAVE THIS PLACE!”

And the rush of this multitude grew mightier, and all the air, and all the holy hill seemed filled with their presence.

At last they became manifest to sight as well as hearing.

On a sudden, in the dim twilight, there appeared innumerable phantom forms, filling the sky, moving on in long procession, with heads bowed like mourners, and faces hidden in robes, and still the cry wailed forth from all.

Then in shadowy outline were revealed the sacred symbols of those things which were used in the temple service,—the table of shew-bread, the golden candlestick, and, more than all, that Holy Ark, which once stood in the ancient Temple, over whose mercy-seat was the shadow of the Most High. All these were revealed. And the senses of the Jews, disordered by long vigil and fasting, descried them as they seemed to move through the air.

At last all faded away, and the sun rose and illuminated the faces of horror that stood gazing at the place where the vision had vanished.

A cry of despair escaped from all. They knew that their hour had come.

The Romans rushed to the attack. All the available strength of the army was brought forward, to make this assault final and irresistible. Vast masses of men moved up the slope and poured into the openings which the flames had made.

The Jews knew that all was lost, but they fought as they had never fought before. Each man wished to die, but had determined to make a Roman life pay for his own.

Backward and still backward they were borne, but still they fought on. At last the advancing Romans stood before the Holy House. Around it the fight raged. The Jews wished most of all to die beside it.

Cineas and Labeo were there, in the midst of this conflict, and marked the despair of the Jews, and all their devotion. Suddenly a Roman soldier seized a brand and rushed to the Temple. He held it up against one of the windows. The flames caught. They darted along the wood-work and the rich hangings with inconceivable rapidity. The light of the conflagration arrested all.

A groan of horror burst from the Jews. With one common impulse they rushed to the Holy House.

The Romans themselves paused for a moment.

The flames shot up, enveloping all, till all one side was covered. The Jews lifted up their hands in despair. They rushed in and out, some calling wildly on others to save the place.

At last a sight appeared which arrested the attention of all.

Upon the roof stood a man, holding a sword in his hand, stained with the blood of the battle and the smoke of the burning house. He stood for a moment motionless, standing on one side where the fire had not yet reached, and looking upon the flames that tossed themselves up to the skies from the other.

Cineas, as he looked up from the crowd below, recognized that face. It was Isaac.

For a few moments Isaac stood motionless. Then he walked forward and threw his sword into the flames.

Then he raised his clenched fist to the skies, and looking up, cried out, in a loud and piercing voice,—

“O God of Abraham! How hast thou mocked the people who trusted in thee!”

The next instant he rushed forward and sprang into the raging flames.





XXXIX.

Conclusion.



ALL was over !

Roman perseverance had triumphed over Jewish fanaticism. The Holy House lay in ashes. The Roman triumphed upon the ruins of Zion. The Jewish nation lost its ancient seat, and began the long exile of ages.

The Roman army occupied themselves with completing their work, with gathering the wretched remnants of a people, and sending them into captivity. The Jews who remained in the country were forced to seek out hiding-places—to cower in the recesses of the mountains—and wait till this calamity might be overpast.

Month succeeded to month.

Gradually a change took place. The forlorn and miserable people began to venture back to their loved Jerusalem, and rebuild their fallen houses.

Among those who thus returned were the Christians, to whom Jerusalem was as dear as to the Jews. They had fled at the first approach of the storm, for they knew what the end would be. Now that the end had come, they sought once more the place which had been so hallowed in their eyes by the presence of their Lord.

Labeo and Cineas looked upon Jerusalem with feelings that no other place could excite.

Here once dwelt that wondrous Being whom they had learned to regard as their hope, their comfort, and the end of all their search.

Here lay the traces of his footsteps ; the shadow of his presence seemed to remain ; and the sound of his words seemed still to linger in the air.

All around was desolation. The few people that tried to make their home here only increased the mournful aspect of the place. The walls lay prostrate. The houses were in heaps. The bodies of the dead had been buried ; but whenever Cineas looked down into the deep valleys around Jerusalem, he thought of that scene which he had once beheld when thousands of corpses lay there.

As they looked around upon all this, they recalled the words of Christ, uttered by him as he wept over Jerusalem.

Jerusalem ! well did it need tears ; even the tears of the Divine One.

So the Christians came back to live once more in the presence of their old haunts, and seek once more those places so dear in their eyes. Among these Cineas and Labeo found many who could give to each spot its own charm, and make the life of the Divine One come back again before them with all its unutterable pathos.

Here they saw the Mount of Olives ; here they saw Gethsemane ; and here, above all, they saw the hill—Calvary.

All these things and many more the friends saw, as they wandered humbly, reverentially, and with chastened hearts, amid these scenes, listening to the traditions of the meek Christian men, who so lovingly traced the footsteps of their Lord about the city which he loved, and in which he had died. In the ruins of that city they could see something which spoke of his divinity ; in the awful catastrophe which had occurred before their eyes, they beheld the close of that ancient revelation which was to be succeeded by the new one. The Deliverer

whom the Jews expected had indeed come. He had fulfilled his work. He had departed. But the Jews knew not this. They had blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts; and in their obstinate persistency in the expectation of material glory for their nation, they had flung themselves into an abyss of woe.

To these two, as the time passed by, it seemed, at length, that of all objects which could engage their minds, only this one thing was worthy of their search, and that was to find Him for whom they longed now with constant desire, to know him, to love him, to give to him all their affections, and all their lives.

At length the Roman armies were ordered to stations elsewhere, and Cineas and Labeo, who thus far had been forced to remain, now found themselves at liberty to return and follow their own desires. And for that they desired nothing more than to know Jesus Christ and him crucified.

At Pergamos they found a teacher who could tell them all that they desired to know.

At his feet they sat, content to listen to him, and receive from him the story of that DIVINE WORD, of whom Cineas had once read in the books of the philosophers, when the name was used to express the wants of man. Now they learned that the WORD had become flesh, and man had seen his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

From this teacher they heard a greater doctrine and a diviner teaching than any which had ever been heard at Athens.

And all was summed up in the one sublime truth, "God loves!"

God loves! This was the end of all revelation. The all-mighty is also the all-loving. O divine and infinite truth! to give this to man needed God himself.

Pergamos seemed like a holy place, as they listened there to the story of Christ—Christ in his acts, in his words, in his prayers; Christ in his power and his mercy; Christ in his wisdom and his knowledge; above all, Christ in his love.

And they learned that Christ, when he departed, left not his people comfortless.

He had gone, but there remained and should remain, through all the ages, till the end, One who is the essence of divine love and pity; One who in himself comprehends all the depths of infinite compassion; whose mission is to bring man to God; to open the way to pardon and to heaven; to speak peace to the mourner, and make hope cast out despair: the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.

There to these men all desire seemed to centre. Content to dwell here, they could gladly have forgotten all else, and passed their lives in holy meditation.

But this was not for them.

Other things than quiet meditation were needed. Their duty was different.

That duty was, above all, to follow Christ; and as he sought, most of all, to call man to God and holiness, even so ought all his disciples, each in his own way.

And so it was that Cineas and Labco were impelled to carry to other men the truth which they had learned.

Cineas went to Athens, and there, in the midst of students and teachers of philosophy, he passed his life in making known sublimer doctrines than those of Plato. He, out of his own experience, could best show where philosophy failed; and where Plato faltered, he could show that Christ was all-sufficient.

This became the work of his life: there, in the centre of thought, the intellectual capital of the ancient world, to stand forth among men and proclaim Christ crucified. He thought,

and rightly too, that all his past life, his varied feelings, his wide experience in other forms of doctrine, both philosophical and Jewish, his extensive observation of the world, all pointed to Athens as the proper place for him.

His labours were not in vain. He went abroad among all classes, talking, preaching, discussing, exhorting, till the Athenians gave him the nickname of "The New Socrates;" but Cineas had a model very different from Socrates, and sought to mould all his life after the pattern of Jesus.

He met with much opposition and much ridicule. Many were the sneers which he encountered, and for years men did not cease to wonder how a Megacleid, and a man of genius, who was familiar with all Greek art and literature and philosophy, could ever have brought his mind to a belief in a crucified Barbarian.

Yet all were not scoffers. Many there were who had the same feelings which he once had. Among these his mission was successful, and he had the joy of seeing many hearts receive the consolation which Christ alone can bring.

Labeo had a different sphere. He was not adapted either by nature or by training to a career among sneering sophists and argumentative philosophers. He wished to tell the simple story of the cross to simple men.

For what else had he in life than this? The memory of one great sorrow was over him, and nothing that the world could offer had any charm. He had found peace, and his only desire was to give up his life to the proclamation of the gospel of peace.

But before he set out to that place which he had chosen as the one where he would pass the remainder of his life, he paid a final visit to Rome.

A letter had come from Julius, informing him that his venerable mother was now at the point of death.

In her life with Lydia, and in her association with her, the

aged Sulpicia could not but see much of Christianity. Insensibly she felt her heart touched by its simple doctrines. Her loneliness afflicted her, for the sweet grandchild whom she loved was dead ; her idolized son was far away, engaged in taking an active part in a dangerous war ; and the sadness which she felt made her readily susceptible to the influence of that religion which, above all things, brings consolation. In her own religion she found absolutely no comfort whatever. The fabled gods of the national religion, for which she had a sort of formal acknowledgment, were worse than useless to one like her. They not only could not attract the mourner, but repelled. In that creed, if creed it may be called, the future was altogether dark, and as she felt herself approaching the confines of the other world, she saw nothing but gloom.

But this religion of Christ, which Lydia possessed and loved, came to her in that time of darkness, and as she looked forward she saw that it illumined all the future. It promised hope and heaven and immortality. It was one which the softened heart might be loath to reject, and eager to embrace. From the mouth of Lydia, who through all her life had been receiving the teachings of her father, the story of Christ became acceptable to Sulpicia, until at last she too believed.

But her great age did not permit a long stay on earth ; and the letter which Labeo received summoned him to her side.

All the filial feeling which he had ever known, revived as he stood by the bedside of his mother ; but the grief which he felt was alleviated as he heard the words of love and trust in her Redeemer which Sulpicia murmured with her latest breath.

The sweet influences which Lydia had exerted over Sulpicia were also felt by Carbo. The old man had lost much of his former harshness. He had long since learned to look on Christianity at least with respect ; he at length learned to regard it

with love. It became his delight, and the object of his life, to accompany his son in his labours for the benefit of the Christian community.

The death of his mother loosened the last tie which bound Labeo to Rome. He saw that Julius was eminent among the Christians for acts of general service, and determined to make this benefit permanent. He therefore gave to Julius his villa and estates, and when Julius refused to take them he insisted on it, telling him that it was not to him that he gave it, but to Christ. Then Julius could no longer refuse. That estate became his, but all that it yielded was at the service of the Christians, to supply their wants, or to help along their enterprises.

All Labeo's heart was fixed on one place, and that was—Britain.

There lay his wife, and there his boy, still loved with undiminished fondness—still longed for. In the land where those loved remains were deposited he determined to pass his days.

When he came to the well-known place, and stood once more in front of the tomb, and read, through his tears, the epitaphs over those idols of his heart, a terrible shock came to him. His feelings overmastered him. He fell on his knees and groaned in his agony. Despair seemed once more to take possession of him. He had miscalculated his strength. He knew not how a return to the scene of an old sorrow can bring back that sorrow in all its freshness.

But as he knelt there, with clenched hands, bloodshot eyes, and heaving breast, with all his thoughts filled with that agony of former years, other things gradually came to his mind, to soothe and to console. Amid the visions of the past new ones came. His wife and child, in his excited fancy, stood beside him, but between the two he saw the form of a Third, a form on which were the marks of cruel scars, but with a face of in-

finite love, that looked towards him, and by its looks spake—peace.

And again that voice of his son sounded, as it had sounded so often before, a sweet childish voice, with tones of love unutterable, that said,—

“Father, we will meet again!”

Then a great joy came to Labeo, and all his despair vanished, and there, even in the presence of the tomb of his son, he felt within him perfect peace.

Throughout Britain his face and form and voice became well known, among Romans, among friendly tribes, and among hostile ones. Much he suffered. Often he was sorely wounded, sometimes death seemed inevitable; yet still he pursued his course, and tried to tell all, both Roman and Barbarian, the story of love. So the years passed.

In that land of Britain there was another of whom Labeo often thought, and whom he longed to meet with.

This was Galdus.

The Briton, after leaving Labeo, had left all the Roman world behind. He turned his head upon all this, and went northward toward those tribes that were yet free. He passed through tribe after tribe, and finding many of them under Roman influence, he still pursued his way.

At last he came among the tribes of Caledonia.

Grief drove him to seek comfort in action. From the quiet life of years in civilization and amid refinement, he now felt a reaction. At the stimulus of grief, all his barbaric nature was aroused, and the thought of war came to him as it had come to Cineas and Labeo. His valour, his strength and courage, his skill in fighting, which had been doubly formed, first by a long use of native weapons, and secondly by his training as a gladiator, all these made him conspicuous as a warrior, and the tribe among whom he cast his lot chose him as their chief. His mind, naturally acute, had been enlarged and strengthened

by civilized life and association with men of intelligence. He had also seen the world. Sorrow had made him grave and calm. He was fit to rule. His influence was felt far and near. In disputes between tribes his decision was called for, until at length many of them chose him voluntarily for their leader.

A great idea took possession of his mind, and that was a combination of all the tribes, to resist Roman conquest and drive Roman armies out of Britain. It animated his life. He went out among the people, firing their hearts, reminding them of the wrongs of Boadicea, enumerating the crimes of the Romans, and exhorting all to union. His words sank deeply into the hearts of the natives, and all became animated with his own spirit. He became the recognized leader of all. The natives called him "*Gald cachach*," "*Gald, the fighter of battles*." The Romans heard of his fame, and, in their own language, called him *Galgacus*.

This name was bestowed on account of the success of his earliest efforts against the Romans. For now an attempt was being made to complete the conquest of Britain, and Agricola was then cautiously leading his legions against an enemy with whose tactics he was well acquainted. He found out that Galdus was making a confederacy, and resolved himself to strike the first blow. He sent a fleet to explore those inland waters which were called Clota and Bodotria. The Caledonians seeing the fleet, took alarm, and at once began war.

Under the lead of Galdus many advantages were obtained. Once, in a night attack, they met with such success that the Roman army was only saved with extreme difficulty.

At last the two armies met near the Grampian Hills, and there the decisive battle was fought. Galdus harangued his men with all that fiery eloquence which so distinguished him in a speech which is preserved in the pages of Tacitus, and stands

there as the most noble vindication of freedom and patriotism that the records of man have preserved.

The great fight was fought ; and the world knows the result. Patriotism, valour, fury, despair, all proved of no avail against discipline and strategic skill. The army of the Caledonin confederacy was destroyed. The tribes retired sullenly still further to the north, to wait there for a later age when they might once more assail the Romans.

Galgacus vanished from the scene. Gald, the fighter of battles, roused the tribes no more.

He saw the ruin of his hopes and the destruction of his plans. The desires that had animated him died out. What remained?

Grief that arose out of that strong affection of his, which through the years had still carried the memory of that sweet boy whom he once regarded as a god, whose words were well remembered, whose form revisited his dreams. Still, amid excitement and battle, that face appeared, full of tender, childish pity, as it had once appeared in the cruel amphitheatre, when it came before his fainting senses, and tender hands were felt, and words of love were heard.

All this remained fixed in his memory.

Vengeance, war, ambition, all were gone ; love remained—such love as belongs to a strong, proud, fierce nature—love mighty, undying. Had he not nursed that love for years, as he carried that boy in his arms, and forgot his country and his kin in his love for him ?

It was about a year after the Grampian fight, when Labeo, who had gone further north than ever before, returned, as was his custom, to fast and pray at the grave of his son. As he came there he saw the figure of a man on the stone pavement before the tomb. The man was motionless. Labeo looked on long in silence, wondering.

At last he went up and touched the man who lay there.

The other turned his head half round, and looked up fiercely and wildly.

The face that was revealed by the light of the moon, that was then shining, was pallid and haggard in the extreme. A shaggy beard and moustache covered the lower part, and matted hair fell over the brow. Yet, in spite of all this, Labeo knew it at once. He knew it by the sorrow that it bore. Who else could mourn at the grave of his son, except one?

Labeo flung himself on his knees beside him and embraced him.

"Galdus!" he cried. "Friend, brother, saviour of him whom we both once loved, Heaven has brought us together. We must part no more."

At these words, spoken with a trembling voice, and with deep emotion, the Briton rose and looked at Labeo with a bewildered stare.

"Do you not know the father of Marcus?" said Labeo.

Galdus flung his arms around Labeo. His whole frame shook.

"He sent you," he murmured at last. "He of whom Marcus used to speak. I have knelt here many nights, and I have tried to remember what I used to hear about him. He took away my boy—my god. I never understood about him. I am only a Barbarian. Did he do this? Did he send you here?"

"He did, he did," cried Labeo, as tears came to his eyes. "It is he, and no other."

"My friend and my brother," said Galdus, "I will never leave you. I have found you, and if you will let me stay near you, I will give you my love and my life. I wish to hear about him whom Marcus loved. He must be like Marcus, and he may be willing to let me see my boy in that bright world where Marcus said he was going. Can you tell me of him? Or can you tell me what Marcus meant? I know all the words that

he used to speak ; but I am only a Barbarian, and I cannot understand them. You can tell me, and I will repeat one by one the words that I used to hear, so that I can understand them."

"Come," said Labeo. "We will never part again. I will tell you about him, and he who brought us together here will make you understand."

Time went on, and the Briton heard from Labeo the story of the One whom Marcus loved. Slowly there dawned on his mind the light of that truth which can be as manifest to the humblest as to the wisest, since the meaning of it all is love.

The Briton, in whom love was so strong, could feel better than many of colder natures the full power of love divine when once the idea had come to his mind. There was yet love for him in return for his own—a love larger and more profound than that which he had lost. The idea came at first dimly, but it came ; and what he gained he retained, and it grew within him until at last it became strong—a radiant light, enlightening all his life.

He clung to Labeo. In his wanderings, his discourses, his perils, his dangers, Labeo had this faithful heart, with all its sympathy, bound to his by a double tie,—love for the same lost one, and for the same Redeemer. He learned at last to do something more than sympathize. He could speak to his fellows in his own rough, rude way, of a truth, and a heaven, and a God, which the Druid had never known, and the follower of the Druid had never hoped for.

Thus, together, these men shared joy and sorrow, and peril and toil, carrying to Roman and to Barbarian the truth which they had learned ; labouring through the years as they passed till labour ended, and rest came.

Galdus found that rest first.

While preparing his body for the grave, Labeo found around his neck a golden ball suspended. It had once belonged to Marcus, who had worn it as all Roman boys did. Galdus had taken this and had worn it next his heart through all those years.

Labeo hung it round his own neck, and wore the dear relic of his boy till he joined him on high.



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